

Haughton Academy

Address: Salters Lane South, Darlington, County Durham, DL1 2AN

Unique reference number (URN): 138089

Inspection report: 12 May 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders understand the strengths and areas for improvement in relation to the curriculum and its implementation. The curriculum is well sequenced so that pupils learn more over time. It has been adapted to match pupils' starting points when they first join the school.

Teachers have the subject knowledge they need to deliver the curriculum well. They know what their pupils have learned and what they need to learn next. Most teachers check pupils' understanding regularly and use this to adapt their approach. Teachers make suitable adjustments and adaptations for pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders have taken effective action to address weaker teaching and ensure that the curriculum is generally taught well. Some of this work is yet to show an impact on published outcomes, as it has only recently been embedded.

A minority of pupils have not secured the knowledge they need in reading, writing and mathematics since joining the school. Leaders provide effective support to help them to catch up quickly. However, a minority of teachers do not always make sure that pupils understand subject-based vocabulary and use it effectively in their writing.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders identify and assess needs quickly and accurately. They know their pupils well, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders make sure staff have the information they need to reduce barriers to learning. Staff receive regular training to best support pupils in lessons. Pupils with an education, health and care plan are supported to achieve their academic and social outcomes. When pupils need some extra help, staff put in place bespoke interventions that meet pupils' individual needs. Pupils can also use the school's inclusion spaces. These spaces provide pupils with small, calm and quiet learning environments. This support improves pupils' wellbeing.

Additional funding is used to make sure that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and known, or previously known, to social care, have the effective support they need to access their learning and the wider school experience. Leaders work closely with external agencies and professionals, including the virtual school, to enhance their offer for pupils. Leaders engage in networks to make sure their pupils benefit from a range of support available in the local area. Alternative provision is used appropriately to provide further support to pupils when they need it.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

There have been changes in the school's leadership over the last year. Leaders have accurately identified and prioritised actions for improvement. Much of this work has already been implemented and is starting to show a positive impact. Leaders know what they need to do next. Leaders, at all levels, understand their roles in improving the school. They have

high expectations of staff and pupils. Leaders make decisions in the best interests of their pupils.

Trustees and governors know the school well. They make sure leaders have the resources that they need to fully support all pupils. Trustees and governors hold leaders to account. They make sure that leaders fulfil their statutory duties.

Leaders care about the workload and wellbeing of staff. They make sure that they have the time they need to undertake their roles effectively. Staff benefit from a high-quality, professional learning programme that is closely aligned to leaders' priorities. This has helped to improve behaviour management and address weaknesses in teaching. Staff benefit from opportunities to network with colleagues from other schools.

Leaders communicate regularly with parents and carers. They are kept up to date about their child's education. Leaders work closely with external professionals to make sure all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are well supported.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have implemented a well-structured programme of personal development. This has been carefully tailored to meet the needs of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils learn about topics that are relevant to them, including online safety. They know how to keep themselves safe and make sensible choices. However, teachers do not always revisit topics in depth. As a result, some older pupils struggle to recall their learning in important areas, such as fundamental British values.

Staff care about the wellbeing of their pupils. Pupils know where to go if they need extra help. Some pupils benefit from targeted support to develop their confidence and self-esteem. Pupils develop leadership skills by joining the student council or becoming prefects or form captains. They represent the school at different events. Pupils gain an understanding of other beliefs and cultures through celebration days. They engage positively in the local community through singing to residents in the local care home and preparing Christmas hampers for the local food bank.

Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with SEND, benefit from a range of opportunities to harness their talents in competitive sports such as swimming and badminton. They are encouraged to participate in the school choir and school performances. Some pupils enjoy participating in crafters club, fashion design or chess club.

Staff provide appropriate careers advice for pupils. They engage regularly with local employers, colleges and apprenticeship providers. Older pupils benefit from meaningful work experience. Pupils are typically well prepared for their next steps.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Some pupils do not achieve highly enough in national tests and examinations. Leaders have taken action to address this by improving teaching. As a result, the quality of current pupils' work is improving. However, these actions are still at an early stage, and a minority of pupils do not yet have the secure knowledge and skills they need to achieve well at the end of key stage 4.

Leaders are taking effective action to support pupils to develop the knowledge and skills they need in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils who need some extra help receive the support they need. They are catching up with their peers and making more progress across the curriculum.

Most pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make sufficient progress from their starting points. These pupils are generally well prepared for their next steps.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

A significant minority of pupils are absent from school too often. This is impacting on what they can achieve. Leaders do not always identify the causes of poor attendance precisely enough, which limits the impact of their work. They have established clearer systems for responding to absence. Leaders provide additional support to help individual pupils to improve their attendance. Leaders and staff promote the importance of attending school regularly, and most pupils do so. Therefore, overall attendance is close to the national average.

The support that leaders provide to a minority of pupils who need it is not improving their behaviour quickly enough. This results in repeat suspensions and exclusion. Leaders and staff have high expectations of pupils. They do not tolerate negative behaviours that impact on others. Leaders have created a school environment that is typically calm and purposeful. The behaviour policy is generally well understood by staff and most pupils. Incidents of bullying or discrimination are responded to effectively. Most pupils benefit from the clear rules and boundaries in place. They conduct themselves well, and low-level disruption in lessons is rare. The majority of pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils feel safe and happy at Haughton Academy. They are well cared for by staff who know them well. Most pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and across the wider school. Pupils respond positively to the high expectations of staff and the clear routines in place. They know where to go if they need some extra help. However, the support that a minority of pupils receive to manage their behaviour is not improving their behaviour quickly enough. Bullying and any form of discrimination are not tolerated and are dealt with effectively. Most

pupils enjoy coming to school and attend well, but a minority of pupils are absent too often and this impacts on how well they can achieve.

Pupils study a broad and balanced curriculum that is generally taught well. They are starting to benefit from improvements that have been made to teaching. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are well supported to access their learning. Some pupils receive extra help to develop their knowledge and skills in reading, writing and mathematics. This is helping them to catch up with their peers. However, a significant minority of pupils do not achieve highly enough in national examinations.

Pupils feel part of the wider school community. Staff encourage them to take part in a range of activities to broaden their experiences. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with SEND, have a voice in choosing what activities they would like to do. These include the young chefs cooking club, musical theatre and the youth group. They enjoy fundraising for charities and sending books to a school in Africa. Some pupils become role models for their younger peers by choosing to be a school leader. Pupils benefit from learning about the world of work. These experiences prepare them well for their next steps when they leave school.

Next steps

- Leaders should further consider, and adapt where necessary, the support they provide to help pupils regulate their emotions and manage their behaviour so that they remain engaged in school.
 - Leaders should ensure severe and persistent absence continues to reduce so that pupils with very low attendance access more of their education.
 - Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is consistently taught well, through high-quality teaching, to enable pupils to secure their learning over time.
 - Leaders should ensure that pupils develop the knowledge and skills that they need, in order to achieve at a higher level in national tests and examinations.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Education Village Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Michael Butler, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ed James.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the principal, senior leaders, the chief executive officer, trustees and governors during the inspection.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Inspectors were aware during this inspection of a serious incident involving a child who used to attend this school, which had occurred since the previous inspection. This incident did not take place in the school. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the school in response to the incident were considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' evaluations.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently makes use of 6 alternative provisions, including 3 that are unregistered.

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. The current principal started in September 2025.

Principal: Jane Darbyshire

Lead inspector:

Nikki Heron, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Jill Bowe, Ofsted Inspector

Graham Findlay, Ofsted Inspector

Katherine Snowdon, Ofsted Inspector

Nicola Reed, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.



This data is from 12 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

890

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

900

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

44.38%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

3.48%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

25.28%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	33.9%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	43.4%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	37.0%	45.3%	Close to average

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	38.0	46.1	Below
2023/24 (final)	39.8	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	42.8	46.3	Close to average

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.57	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.29	-0.03	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	18.6%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	22.2%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	19.6%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	27.9	34.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	30.5	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	33.1	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-1.00	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.74	-0.57	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	18.6%	53.1%	-34.6 pp
2023/24 (final)	22.2%	53.1%	-30.9 pp
2022/23 (final)	19.6%	52.4%	-32.8 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	27.9	50.4	-22.5
2023/24 (final)	30.5	50.0	-19.5
2022/23 (final)	33.1	50.3	-17.2

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-1.00	0.16	-1.17
2022/23 (final)	-0.74	0.17	-0.90

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (revised)	90%	92%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	84%	93%	Below
2021 leavers (revised)	90%	94%	Below

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	9.3%	8.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	10.2%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	11.1%	9.0%	Above

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	29.6%	23.4%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	31.5%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	35.6%	26.5%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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