

Inspection of The Blyth Academy

Chase Farm Drive, Blyth, Northumberland NE24 4JP

Inspection dates: 22–23 October 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

The Blyth Academy is a calm and friendly place for pupils to learn. It is improving but there is still more to do to ensure that all pupils achieve well. Pupils enjoy coming to school and they feel safe. They say that staff look after them and want the best for them. Pupils know that they can be themselves and so they accept others for what they are.

Pupils and staff explained that behaviour is much better than it used to be. This is because all adults use the policies for managing pupils' behaviour consistently. It is clear that pupils know what they are allowed to do, and what they are not. Staff have high expectations of all pupils.

There is a lot for pupils to do at the school. The 'enrichment' activities that take place at the end of each day are well attended. Pupils enjoy learning Japanese, working on go-carts and developing new skills. Many pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

Pupils say they are proud to be at the school and that they are happy. Every pupil we spoke to said that bullying is rare.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have been successful in improving pupils' behaviour and attendance. They are now reviewing the curriculum, the way they organise learning and the subjects offered. This is because some parts of the curriculum are not yet developed well, and pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Curriculum plans for science and modern foreign languages, for example, have been reviewed recently. Over time, pupils have not learned as much as they should have in these subjects. This is because they do not remember important knowledge as well as they do in other subjects. The most able pupils also need work that challenges them more. The curriculum is better in mathematics. Pupils learn things that they will use in future lessons. Teachers regularly check how well pupils have remembered and understood key concepts. As a result, pupils are able to tackle more challenging work.

Sometimes, when teachers are assessing pupils' work in lessons, they do not correct errors. This leads to gaps in pupils' knowledge. If pupils understood these concepts, they would achieve more. Leaders intend to make sure that teachers use assessment more consistently across all subjects.

Pupils' reading skills are not sufficiently well developed. A new reading programme has been introduced by school leaders. Very few pupils who spoke with inspectors are currently reading a book. Pupils are not broadening their vocabulary.

Pupils' personal and social development and their behaviour are good. Pupils behave well in lessons. Senior leaders and governors have very clear expectations. They want the pupils leaving The Blyth Academy to be resilient and independent in adult life. The school's Life@Blyth programme helps pupils to understand what it means to be a good citizen. During an assembly on healthy eating, pupils were confident to discuss and share their thoughts with their partners. They listened well to the presenter and made links to their own experiences.

Staff manage behaviour consistently well. Pupils get on with activities as soon as they start their lessons. This helps them to focus and concentrate on their work. Working routines are well established.

Leaders have not made sure that all teachers can teach the curriculum effectively. They have successfully increased the proportion of pupils gaining good grades in English and mathematics, but success in other subjects is variable. In some subjects, the curriculum is not demanding enough. This means that the most able pupils are not as well prepared for the next stage in their education as they could be. Overall, there have been improvements in leadership since the last inspection. The headteacher, with the support of her leadership team and staff, is rapidly improving the school. Leaders know what they need to improve. They are supported by staff who feel valued. Staff morale is high.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are all included in the life of the school. They receive support in lessons in a range of different ways. Pupils enjoy learning in The Bridge, where they get the personal support they need.

The sixth form is very small and only has students in Year 13. Students told inspectors how much they value the support they receive from teachers. They know what they need to do to move into employment or university study because they receive high-quality careers advice and guidance. They would like more opportunities to share their thoughts and opinions about the school with leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school's approach to safeguarding is strong. Leaders work well with external agencies, parents and other services. Staff know the pupils well and act quickly when concerns arise. Pupils are taught about the risks they may face and how to keep themselves safe. The school understands its community and the pressures on children and their families. Pupils say that they feel safe in school. Leaders carry out the required checks to ensure that all adults working in the school are suitable. There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In science and modern foreign languages, the curriculum content is not organised as well as in other subjects. Not all teachers check what pupils know and understand before introducing new learning. Over time, pupils have not learned the content of these subjects well enough. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum for science and modern foreign languages is carefully sequenced and delivered effectively for all pupils.
- All middle leaders within the school need to have a strong vision for their subjects. They must know their subject in depth and use this to help other teachers to secure a consistent approach to delivering the curriculum. This will enable standards to rise across key stages.
- Leaders need to ensure that assessment methods give teachers a clear picture of what pupils know and can do. They should ensure that teachers' assessment explores pupils' knowledge and understanding so that gaps and misconceptions can be addressed. Teachers should use this information to plan learning that addresses pupils' gaps in knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils do not have strong reading habits. The reading culture in the school is still being developed. This results in pupils having a limited vocabulary and a lack of confidence in reading and speaking. Leaders need to embed reading for pleasure across the school.
- The most able pupils are not always given the academic support they need in lessons. Teachers need to adapt their lesson planning carefully in order to support these pupils in their classes. Teachers need to challenge the most able pupils with learning that meets their specific needs.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government

pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	140002
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10087568
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	784
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	21
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Julie Kelly
Principal	Donna Park (Principal), Nikki Gibb (Executive principal)
Website	www.theblythacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	3–4 May 2017

Information about this school

- At the previous inspection on 3–4 May 2017, the school was judged to require improvement. A monitoring inspection took place on 5 July 2018.
- The school currently uses three alternative providers: Educ8, Engage and New Leaf.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is above the national average.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The school is part of the Northern Education Trust.

Information about this inspection

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

- We met with members of the senior leadership team, curriculum leaders and the special needs coordinator. We also met with leaders responsible for safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and personal development. The lead inspector met with the chief executive of the trust, the chair and members of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority.
- We took into account the 52 responses to Ofsted’s staff survey and the responses from parents to Parent View.
- We met with pupils to discuss their views about the school. No pupils responded to Ofsted’s online pupil survey.
- We evaluated the quality of education by looking in detail at the teaching of English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, humanities and physical education. We discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils’ workbooks and talked to pupils and teachers.
- We checked safeguarding records and procedures, discussed cases with a safeguarding leader and questioned staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Tudor Griffiths, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Bernard Senier	Ofsted Inspector
Shelley Heseltine	Ofsted Inspector
Colin Bell	Ofsted Inspector

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