

# Inspection of a good school: Abbey Hill Academy

Ketton Road, Hardwick Estate, Stockton-on-Tees TS19 8BU

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Inspection dates: 28–29 January 2020

## Outcome

Abbey Hill Academy continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Abbey Hill Academy is a kind and welcoming place. Pupils are safe and happy and enjoy coming to school.

Staff know the pupils well. Relationships are positive. Pupils know there are trusted adults who will support them to learn and keep them safe.

Staff have worked hard to change how they react and respond to pupils' behaviour. This helps pupils to be more in control of their emotions. Leaders' analysis shows that pupils' behaviour has improved significantly as a result.

Pupils are taught to be kind and respectful. The staff and pupils in 'Team Happy' ensure that friendships are encouraged and that everyone is made welcome. Bullying is rare. Pupils understand what bullying is and how it affects them. Any bullying that does happen is dealt with swiftly. Parents and carers and pupils agree.

Leaders have high aspirations. However, this is not always seen in the order in which topics are taught. In subjects such as personal and social development, pupils study a range of separate modules that, over a year, do not sequentially develop their skills and knowledge. This means that some pupils are not learning the basic steps.

Parents are positive about Abbey Hill. One parent reflected the views of the others when they said, 'the children are supported in every aspect'.

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

All pupils who attend Abbey Hill Academy are taught a range of subjects. In some subjects, such as English and science, the information that pupils need to learn is well structured. This helps pupils to fill gaps in knowledge and build on their skills. In other subjects, the approach to organising what the pupils learn is not as clear.

Teachers ask questions to check that pupils understand what is being taught. This helps teachers to have an accurate understanding of what pupils know and what they still need to learn.

Reading is a focus for leaders. Pupils develop their love of reading through high-quality books that are right for pupils' age and ability, and by listening to stories and then discussing what they have read and reading aloud in class. Some pupils start at Abbey Hill Academy unable to read. An age-appropriate scheme has been introduced to enable them to rapidly learn the sounds that letters represent. This enables them to access wider reading.

Leaders ensure that pupils' learning is not limited to academic subjects. Pupils told us about the different lunchtime and after-school clubs they belong to, such as those for music, computers, hydrotherapy and sport. These clubs broaden their learning and support their physical development. Pupils also spoke with enthusiasm about trips and visits to the local library and the activities they take part in on a Wednesday afternoon, including judo and gardening.

Leaders have made sure that the system to assess pupils' progress closely matches their needs. This system links with the pupil's education, health and care (EHC) plan. Teachers use these assessments to plan work that challenges pupils to learn and develop further.

Sixth-form students get precisely the right support to help them to get ready for when they leave school. Knowledgeable staff, impartial careers advice and a work-experience and volunteer programme support students to decide what they want to do when they leave school.

Pupils can concentrate on their work as behaviour is managed well. Leaders and teachers are clear about the behaviours that they expect from the pupils. Pupils understand exactly what is expected of them. Pupils show respect to their friends, teachers and visitors.

Staff say that leaders care about their well-being as well as that of the pupils. They speak highly about the support and opportunities they receive and of leaders' 'open-door' policy. Staff are confident to speak to both the school and the trust leaders if there was a problem. Leaders ensure that staff have the training and support they need to develop.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding has a high priority. Staff are well trained and knowledgeable in this area. Staff spoke confidently about procedure and policies relating to keeping children safe.

The members of staff with responsibility for safeguarding, both within the school and the trust, are diligent. They have strong knowledge of the local issues facing the pupils at Abbey Hill Academy. Leaders work well with other agencies to make sure that pupils get the help and support they need in a timely fashion.

Leaders carry out thorough checks on the suitability of adults working at the school.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- There is variation in how well curriculum leaders understand and plan what pupils should learn. In some subjects, for example personal and social development education, teachers are not clear about what they want the pupils to learn, building on the knowledge pupils already have. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum plans for all subjects and across all pathways are coherent and well sequenced.

## **Background**

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2015.

## **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 are the school and you are 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139974
<b>Local authority</b>	Stockton-on-Tees
<b>Inspection number</b>	10110857
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	306
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	79
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of board of trustees</b>	Maurice Jones
<b>Principal</b>	Rebecca Whelan
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.horizontrust.org.uk">www.horizontrust.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	24–25 June 2015

## Information about this school

- Abbey Hill Academy is part of the Horizon Academy Trust. The school caters for pupils between the ages of 11 and 19. The school has sixth-form provision.
- Pupils have a range of profound, multiple, severe and moderate learning difficulties, including autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school runs lunchtime and after-school clubs on the school site.
- The school was not using any alternative provision at the time of the inspection. Twelve pupils were educated in a mainstream secondary school.

## Information about this inspection

- We held meetings with senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers and support staff. The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of the trust, the chair of the academy council and a trustee.

- We met with pupils to discuss their views about their learning and about the school. We took account of nine responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire. Inspections also considered 75 responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire and 53 pupil questionnaire responses.
- We evaluated the quality of education by looking in detail at English, mathematics, science and personal and social development education. We discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. We also spoke to pupils and teachers about the curriculum.

### **Inspection team**

Tricia Stevens, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Zoe Westley

Ofsted Inspector

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