

# Inspection of The Blyth Academy

Chase Farm Drive, Blyth, Northumberland NE24 4JP

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Inspection dates: 6 to 7 July 2021

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education

**Good**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires Improvement**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Requires Improvement

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The Blyth Academy is an improved, well-led school. The headteacher has high expectations of staff, and staff have high expectations of pupils. Leaders and teachers have created a calm, productive environment, where pupils are able to learn effectively.

Pupils enjoy their lessons at this school. They work hard and are keen to impress their teachers. Pupils wear their uniform with pride. They have positive relationships with their teachers. Pupils take part in the many sporting, academic and cultural activities the school provides and enjoy doing so.

Lessons are purposeful and well delivered. When incidents of low-level disruption occur, teachers take effective action to ensure lessons remain orderly. Many pupils improve their behaviour over time, but not all. A small number of them end up being taught out of normal lessons and not following the same ambitious curriculum.

Pupils told us that bullying happens rarely. When it does occur, pupils say staff ensure it is resolved quickly. The school's records show that bullying is infrequent. Parents and staff say the school is a safe place for pupils to be. They recognise the positive changes that have taken place at the school over recent years.

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

Leaders are passionate about making a difference to the lives of pupils. They are enthusiastic about pupils having opportunities to succeed in adult life. This vision is shared by all staff and by those with responsibility for governance. Staff are proud to work at the school. Most pupils are proud to attend the school.

Leaders at the school, supported by the wider multi-academy trust they are part of, have redesigned the school's curriculum. The school has detailed plans about what needs to be taught in individual subjects. Teachers follow these plans closely, using assessments appropriately to support pupil's learning. Teachers use well-designed tasks to help pupils remember the most important content. Pupils are benefiting from this consistency. The work they produce in their class books is of a high quality. As a result, they can remember most of what has been previously taught. Over time, results in external examinations have improved.

Pupils study a wide range of subjects. The number of pupils accessing subjects such as geography, history and modern foreign languages in key stage 4 is rising. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully immersed into the life of the school. These pupils study the same subjects as their peers. Teachers are supported in making adaptations in lessons to ensure the needs of pupils with SEND are met. Although some of these approaches are not yet fully embedded, the strategy to address this is clear.

Overall, rates of attendance have improved over time. However, some pupils still do not attend school as often as they should. As a result, these pupils have gaps in their learning. Leaders contact parents and carers regularly when pupils are absent. However, some parents and carers find it difficult to get in touch with the school. Leaders and governors are keen to address this.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils also receive lessons to help prepare them for life as adults. For example, the weekly 'LIFE' lessons cover important topics such as equality, diversity and respect. The recent election of a student president allowed pupils to learn about democracy and freedom of speech. Pupils receive appropriate careers advice and guidance. However, not all pupils feel this support takes into account their own long-term career aspirations.

The behaviour of pupils at this school has improved. Pupils are polite to adults. Most pupils have a positive attitude to learning. When pupils do not behave well, leaders intervene quickly. Although the total number of exclusions has fallen, they remain high. The work leaders are doing to improve the behaviour of individual pupils is not always having the intended impact. This is leading to some pupils being repeatedly excluded or placed in the school's internal 'supervision room' too frequently.

There is an improved culture of reading at the school. Teachers are passionate about the importance of reading. Pupils understand why reading is so important. They have opportunities to read regularly. Support for pupils who need further help to read fluently is appropriate. This support is helping these pupils improve their ability to read.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Processes for protecting children are robust. The school maintains accurate and detailed safeguarding records. Logs of safeguarding training undertaken by staff are thorough. Adults are aware of the risks pupils face, both locally and nationally. Pupils and staff know who to speak to if they have any concerns. Leaders do not delay in taking decisive action to ensure pupils remain safe.

Leaders ensure appropriate checks are made before new staff start working at the school. They also ensure checks have been made on other adults who are involved in the school's wider work, such as school bus drivers, and staff working at alternative provision centres.

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

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

- Although many pupils attend the school regularly, some do not. The number of pupils who are persistently absent from school remains too high. These pupils are

not fully benefitting from the school's broad curriculum. Leaders must ensure that all pupils attend school regularly.

- The number of exclusions, and the frequency of classroom removals, have both declined over time. However, they remain too high. Some pupils are not improving their behaviour. Some pupils' attitudes towards school are not positive. This is leading to them being removed from lessons too often. Leaders need to ensure that the number of exclusions, and frequency of classroom removals, continue to reduce.
- Pupils who are not in regular lessons do not get the same opportunities to learn about life in modern Britain. They miss out on lessons such as those focusing on equality, democracy and maintaining healthy relationships. It is important that all pupils learn about these topics as they prepare for life after school. Leaders must ensure all pupils benefit from the school's personal development offer.

## 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 [here](#).

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>	140002
<b>Local authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	10194037
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	766
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Mark Sanders OBE
<b>Principal</b>	Donna Park
<b>Executive Principal</b>	Andrew Jordan
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://tba.northerneducationtrust.org">tba.northerneducationtrust.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	10 to 11 February 2021 under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school's sixth form closed in 2020.
- The proportion of pupils at this school 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.

- At the time of this inspection, approximately half of pupils were being educated off site due to COVID-19 (coronavirus). Several members of staff were also working remotely.
- Inspectors met with members of the senior leadership team, curriculum leaders and the designated safeguarding leader. They met with the special educational

needs coordinator and scrutinised the school's records for pupils with SEND. They met with the reading leader and observed a reading intervention session.

- Inspectors met with those responsible for pupils' personal development. They also met with the school's recently elected student president. Inspectors met with the chief executive officer of the trust and with the chair and members of the governing body, known locally as the combined academy council. Some of these meetings were conducted remotely.
- Inspectors took into account 54 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 28 responses from parents on Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors met with several groups of pupils to discuss their views about the school. No pupils responded to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors evaluated the quality of education by looking in detail at the teaching of English, mathematics, geography and modern foreign languages. They discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils' workbooks and talked to teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors spoke to four 'alternative provision' providers who are currently educating a small number of pupils who usually attend this school.

### **Inspection team**

James Duncan, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Julian Appleyard

Ofsted Inspector

Marc Doyle

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