

Inspection of a good school: Darwen Aldridge Enterprise Studio

Police Street, Darwen, Lancashire, BB3 1AF

Inspection dates:

14 to 15 September 2021

Outcome

Darwen Aldridge Enterprise Studio continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Darwen Aldridge Enterprise Studio School is a nurturing place where pupils thrive and succeed. Many pupils overcome their previous poor experiences of school. They enjoy coming here. Pupils have positive relationships with staff. This helps them to develop their self-confidence. Pupils rise to the high expectations that leaders and staff have of them. Pupils respect differences. Most pupils behave well and work hard in lessons. They socialise well at breaktimes and lunchtimes.

Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe. They are confident that staff will deal with any concerns that they have. Staff provide a range of support for pupils' mental health and well-being. Pupils reported that bullying is rare and that staff act quickly to resolve any incidents of bullying should they occur.

Pupils and students enjoy learning work-related courses in creative and digital media. They benefit from many opportunities to experience the world of work. This helps them to be work ready. Many students in the sixth form move into these fields when they leave school. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the clubs that have restarted, including football, photography and the gardening club.

Parents and carers spoke highly about the support that their children receive. Most would recommend the school to others.

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

Leaders and governors are ambitious for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils, and students in the sixth form, follow a broad range of subjects, including academic and work related courses, such as film and television production and graphic design. Most curriculum plans clearly set out what pupils need to learn and when they should learn it. This helps teachers to build on pupils' knowledge as they move through the school. Most pupils and

students achieve well. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.

The revised curriculum plans in a small number of subjects, such as science, are still relatively new. This means that teachers are still in the process of becoming familiar with these new plans. As such, it is too early to see how well the improved curriculum is helping pupils to know and remember more in these subjects.

Teachers use assessment strategies well to identify and address gaps in pupils' learning. Pupils have useful opportunities to recap and revisit their prior learning from key stage 3 before they start their GCSE courses in English, mathematics and science. This helps pupils to have a solid foundation on which to build future knowledge and understanding. Teachers use their specialist knowledge, including that of the world of work and industry, effectively to provide clear explanations and deepen pupils' learning.

Leaders want pupils to become confident and fluent readers. Leaders have raised the profile of reading across the school. They have invested in high-quality texts and revamped the library. Leaders and teachers make sure that pupils spend time reading each week. This is helping pupils to develop their vocabulary. Pupils who struggle to read receive appropriate support to help them practise their skills and catch up quickly.

Many pupils with SEND have experienced a disrupted education in the past, including low attendance at previous schools. Leaders are quick to identify the needs of these pupils and then to adapt the curriculum appropriately. This enables pupils with SEND to be successful as they progress through the curriculum.

The school is a calm and welcoming place to be. Pupils are polite and courteous to visitors. Pupils told inspectors that they are treated fairly by staff. Most pupils listen attentively during lessons and follow instructions. They want to learn. This means lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour.

Older pupils and students in the sixth form receive effective careers advice and guidance. Pupils and students benefit from workshops led by industry experts and the plentiful opportunities to take part in work experience placements across the year. This allows them to make informed choices about their future. A high proportion of students in the sixth form move on to university courses and apprenticeships. Pupils enjoy raising money for charity. They enjoy participating in a wide range of trips and visits, such as to museums and theme parks.

Pupils learn about British values, such as democracy and the rule of law. This helps them to be prepared for life in modern Britain. However, some small aspects of healthy relationships, such as consent, are not taught in sufficient detail. This is partly because of the impact of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic on leaders' planning. Leaders are aware of this and are in the process of developing their curriculum plans further.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They said that leaders and governors are considerate of their workload and well-being. Staff appreciate the training that they receive from the

Aldridge Education Trust. This helps them to develop their subject knowledge and expertise.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils' safety is given high priority and staff are vigilant. Staff are appropriately trained and know how to spot the signs of abuse, including sexual abuse. They know what to do if they have concerns about a pupil's safety or welfare. Leaders manage referrals effectively. They work well with external agencies, such as health and social care professionals, to support vulnerable pupils. Pupils know the potential dangers that they could face when using the internet.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The changes leaders have made to the curriculum in some subjects, such as science, are recent and have not had sufficient time to become embedded. This means, occasionally, some pupils do not progress through the curriculum as effectively as they should. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum plans are fully in place and then check that they are having the intended impact on pupils' learning.
- Most aspects of the personal, social, health and economic curriculum are well planned and delivered. However, leaders have not planned for some small parts of knowledge about healthy relationships, including consent, to be taught in sufficient detail. Leaders should ensure that they develop suitable plans and implement these securely in order to further enhance pupils' personal development. This will enable pupils to be even better prepared for their future lives.

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 or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 25 and 26 March 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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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

Unique reference number	139924
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10183993
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy studio school
Age range of pupils	13 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	269
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	77
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Brent Thomas
Principal	Colin Grand
Website	www.daestudio.biz
Date of previous inspection	25 and 26 March 2015, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Darwen Aldridge Enterprise Studio is part of the Aldridge Education Multi Academy Trust. It provides specialist education in creative, digital and media education. Since the last inspection, the curriculum has expanded to include health and social care and child development.
- The current principal was appointed in 2018. Since then he has also been appointed as the principal of another school within the trust. He shares his time between both schools.
- The school has experienced an increase in the number of pupils and students on roll since its previous inspection. It is smaller than an average-sized school.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the principal, other senior leaders, subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, staff, the chair of the local governing committee, the chief education officer of Aldridge Education Trust and the science advisor for the trust. An inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to many pupils and students about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed their behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation document, improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' behaviour.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors looked at safeguarding policies and reviewed leaders' record of checks on the suitability of staff and governors. An inspector met with the designated safeguarding leads. Inspectors also spoke to pupils and staff about safeguarding and considered parents' views.
- Inspectors considered the four responses to the online Parent View questionnaire, including the four free-text comments. An inspector spoke with parents at the start of the school day to gather their views and considered leaders' own analysis of the views of pupils, parents and staff.
- No responses were received to the online questionnaires for pupils and staff.
- Inspectors did deep dives in English, film, photography and mathematics. They visited a sample of lessons in these subjects, met with subject leaders, reviewed pupils' work and had discussions with teachers and a small group of pupils. In addition, an inspector reviewed the curriculum planning for science, health and social care and PHSE.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sharon Asquith

Ofsted Inspector

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