

Inspection of a good school: Witton Park Academy

Buncer Lane, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB2 6TD

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 November 2021

Outcome

Witton Park Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Witton Park Academy said that leaders and staff have high expectations for their learning, regardless of their background. Pupils appreciate the strong relationships that they forge with staff. These relationships help pupils to develop their self-confidence. Pupils enjoy coming to school to learn. They benefit from studying a wide range of subjects. They achieve well.

Pupils said that they feel happy and safe at school. Most pupils respect each other's differences. Pupils told inspectors that incidents of bullying are rare. They said that if bullying does happen, teachers and other adults respond quickly to resolve any issues.

Leaders expect high standards of behaviour from pupils. Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the site. Pupils enjoy learning in a calm environment with few interruptions.

Pupils engage positively in a wide range of activities which widen their horizons and deepen their understanding of the world. For example, pupils enjoy trips to London and to local castles. They take part enthusiastically in clubs and sports, including trampolining, girls' football and engineering club.

Most parents and carers said that they appreciate the quality of education that pupils receive. They would recommend the school to others.

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

Leaders and governors ensure that all pupils follow a broad and ambitious curriculum. They carefully consider pupils' best interests when selecting the qualifications that pupils study. In key stage 3, for example, leaders have introduced activities into the curriculum to build pupils' resilience in learning. In key stage 4, pupils choose from a wide range of subjects that match their interests and aspirations for the future. More recently, leaders have successfully increased the number of pupils that are studying a modern foreign

language. This is increasing the proportion of pupils who follow the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) suite of subjects. The EBacc is at the heart of the school's curriculum.

Across all subjects, leaders have developed appropriate curriculum plans. They have thought carefully about the knowledge that pupils should learn and in which order it should be taught. Teachers use curriculum plans well to design appropriate learning activities that help pupils to remember essential knowledge. They ensure that lessons build on what pupils already know and can do. As a result, pupils develop the rich body of knowledge required to progress well through the curriculum. This contributes to their strong achievement.

Teachers ensure that pupils revisit their learning regularly. Teachers use assessment effectively to identify and address any misconceptions that pupils may have in their learning.

Teachers accurately identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They are skilled at adapting lessons so that these pupils can learn the same ambitious curriculum as other pupils in the school. Pupils with SEND achieve well.

Leaders have a clear focus on developing pupils' reading and vocabulary knowledge. Pupils who are at the earliest stages of learning to read benefit from an effective programme to help them to read more fluently. This helps these pupils to access the wider curriculum. Teachers support pupils well to develop subject-specific vocabulary.

Most pupils show positive attitudes towards their learning. Typically, pupils can learn without disruption. Pupils said that behaviour in lessons is well managed by most teachers. However, a small number of staff lack confidence in managing behaviour. This, at times, means that they do not follow the agreed approaches for dealing with unacceptable behaviour. This can slow down pupils' learning.

Leaders have developed a strong programme to support pupils' wider personal development. Pupils spoke highly of the 'graduate' programme. Pupils are confident in discussing issues relating to relationships and sex education. They have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships. Teachers prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils benefit from a well-designed careers programme.

Trustees and governors are committed to supporting leaders in continually improving the quality of education for all pupils. Senior leaders manage the school well. Leaders take positive action to support the workload and well-being of staff. Staff are proud to work in the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. Leaders ensure that teachers receive appropriate safeguarding training, including around peer-on-peer abuse. Leaders

and teachers are vigilant. They are alert to pupils' concerns. Staff know how to spot the signs of potential abuse.

Leaders manage safeguarding referrals effectively. They work well with a wide range of other agencies to provide timely support to pupils and their families.

Pupils are clear about who they can go to should they need help. Pupils learn how to keep safe, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small number of teachers lack confidence in managing pupils' behaviour. Sometimes this results in inconsistencies in the way that teachers apply the school's behaviour policy. As a result, pupils' behaviour can occasionally have a negative impact on the learning of others. Leaders should ensure that staff receive appropriate training in behaviour management and that they are confident in using the school procedures.

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 evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 in September 2016.

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	140879
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10200063
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,241
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	John Mills
Headteacher	Andy Burton
Website	www.witton.atctrust.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 and 21 September 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Witton Park Academy is part of the Achievement Through Collaboration Trust.
- A new chair of the governing body was appointed in September 2020.
- A new headteacher was appointed in September 2018.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at two local providers.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors held meetings with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the chair of governors and members of the governing body. Inspectors also met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and the special educational needs coordinator.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in mathematics, history, English and citizenship. They visited a sample of lessons in these subjects, met with subject leaders, reviewed pupils' work and held discussions with teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentary evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plans. They also looked at minutes of governing body meetings.
- An inspector looked at safeguarding policies and reviewed leaders' records of checks on the suitability of staff and governors. They met with the leaders who have overall responsibility for safeguarding. Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils about leaders' work to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors spoke with the leaders responsible for SEND and reading.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and carers. This included the free-text responses provided by parents.

Inspection team

David Hampson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Edmondson	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Holmes	Ofsted Inspector

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