

Inspection of a good school: Attleborough Academy

9 Norwich Road, Attleborough, Norfolk NR17 2AJ

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 December 2021

Outcome

Attleborough Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, share teachers' high expectations of what they can achieve. Pupils take their education seriously and want to do well. They enjoy learning and produce good-quality work.

Pupils take their leadership roles seriously. They have plenty of leadership opportunities, such as those of house captains, peer mentors and members of sixth-form committees. Younger pupils say that older pupils, such as prefects, help them to settle in well.

The behaviour of very many pupils in lessons is good. They stick at their learning, including when activities ask a lot of them. Sometimes, a few pupils do not behave as well as they should. Teachers use well-established school systems to manage this effectively.

Pupils and staff enjoy positive relationships. Pupils say staff that know and care for them. One Year 13 student's comment – 'I am a person, not a number, here' – is typical of many pupils' views.

Pupils feel safe, and many speak of the school's open culture. They have great respect for the work of the student support team. Pupils spoken with by inspectors and many who responded to Ofsted's survey trust that adults will sort out issues that they report, including the few incidents of bullying.

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

Senior leaders give staff clear guidance on how to plan and deliver an ambitious programme of learning. Subject leaders are well trained. In most subjects, they have plotted a coherent curriculum from Year 7 through to Year 13. Many pupils progress well along these clear curriculum paths.

Teachers deliver the curriculum in line with leaders' expectations. Staff and pupils share a common curricular language that is laid out in each subject's 'learning journey'. Teachers

in all key stages emphasise the 'golden nuggets' of facts and words that pupils should know inside out. Teachers make good use of assessment to check pupils' grasp of new information. For example, in lessons, teachers routinely 'take five' to revisit pupils' earlier learning. Pupils say that this gives them confidence to take on fresh information. Staff are keen to learn too. They put into practice teaching strategies that they acquire in training. This helps teachers to deliver the curriculum well.

Some aspects of the curriculum need further work. Leaders are rightly adjusting the key stage 3 curriculum in science, so that it matches the depth and ambition evident elsewhere. Leaders have also sped up the increase in the take-up of some subjects in key stage 4 that has, in the past, limited the proportion of pupils achieving the English Baccalaureate.

Leaders are ramping up their work to foster a love of reading among pupils, including in the sixth form. Pupils who struggle with their literacy get suitable help. All pupils take part in daily reading sessions. Many pupils speak with confidence and read with fluency.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is part of the curriculum design in each subject. Staff provide pupils with SEND with the time and support to access the same curriculum as their classmates.

Pupils praise the teaching and care that staff provided throughout periods of remote learning. Pupils in key stage 4 and key stage 5 said that this helped to ease anxieties brought on by the pandemic.

Pupils say that staff encourage them to treat people of all backgrounds with respect. Pupils play an important role in keeping themselves and others safe. Year 11 pupils are proud of their impressive work to promote healthy relationships and equality. Pupils learn about relationships, sex education and safety through the well-designed personal, social, health and citizenship education programme. They have a very high opinion of their teachers' expertise and sensitivity in delivering this subject.

Pupils receive appropriate careers education, which begins in Year 7 and continues through to Year 13. Key stage 5 students explained how the online 'futures week' helped them to make better informed choices about the next stage of their lives.

Leaders run high-profile campaigns to heighten pupils' awareness of issues such as bullying and safety. Pupils said that staff listen to them and act on their concerns. However, a small proportion of pupils would like issues they raise with adults to be handled more effectively.

The trust has provided added impetus and expertise. The trust, leaders, governors and staff share higher expectations for pupils' academic achievement. Together they have identified the right priorities to bring about further improvement.

Staff are proud to work at Attleborough Academy. They, like many pupils, consider it a special place to be.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is of paramount importance. Staff receive appropriate training. They are vigilant in checking on pupils' welfare. They create an environment where pupils become confident to speak about any worries they may have.

Leaders provide pupils with information about risks to their safety to raise their awareness. This information is delivered by external experts when appropriate. Pupils help to present aspects of the well-being programme.

Safeguarding leaders take appropriate action when a pupil needs help. Leaders also draw on external support when it is required.

The trust and governors check that the school meets its safeguarding duties.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The key stage 3 curriculum matches or exceeds the ambition of the national curriculum in many subjects. Several years ago, leaders moved from a two-year to a three-year key stage 3 curriculum. In science, this process is not complete. Leaders should build on their existing work to make sure that the curriculum in science is more clearly aligned with senior leaders' expectations for a three-year key stage 3.
- Leaders have made sure that there are many avenues through which pupils can report any anxieties that they may have. Pupils know what these are and very many are confident that staff will deal well with issues that are raised. A few pupils are not as confident. Leaders should take steps to further review the routes through which pupils report concerns. Leaders should then reinforce expectations of staff once a concern is reported.

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 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 | 140534 |
| Local authority | Norfolk |
| Inspection number | 10200054 |
| Type of school | Secondary comprehensive |
| School category | Academy converter |
| 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 | 850 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 120 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Peter Rout |
| Principal | Neil McShane (Executive Principal) |
| Website | www.attleboroughacademy.org |
| Date of previous inspection | 20 and 21 September 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Attleborough Academy is smaller than the average-sized 11–18 secondary school.
- The school joined the Sapientia Education Trust in June 2020.
- The school has recently completed a programme of new building works. The new building is now open to pupils and staff.
- The school makes use of one unregistered provider of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection the school had 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 carried out deep dives in art, English, history and science.
- For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector also spoke with one other subject leader and looked at curriculum plans and some pupils' work in a small number of other subjects.
- Inspectors met with the executive principal and other members of the school's leadership team, including the head of the sixth form.
- Inspectors looked at school documentation and spoke with leaders, teachers, support staff, a governor, pupils, parents and carers, and representatives from the trust to establish the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding procedures.
- The lead inspector met those responsible for governance. In this meeting were the vice-chair of governors and the chief executive officer from the trust.
- Inspectors also spent time observing and speaking with pupils at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents expressed in the 51 responses to Parent View. The school's own analysis of its numerous surveys of parents' opinions was also considered.
- Inspectors considered the views in the 179 responses to the pupil survey and 69 responses to the staff survey. Inspectors also considered the responses to several school and external surveys of pupils' opinions conducted over recent months and years.

Inspection team

John Lucas, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Karen Kerridge

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates:
<http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022