

# Inspection of Atlantic Academy Portland

Maritime House, Southwell Park, Portland, Dorset DT5 2NA

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Inspection dates: 19 and 20 January 2022

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

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

Atlantic Academy sits proudly on the southernmost point of Portland. This is an all-through school that has made a remarkable turnaround in a few years, during building works and the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders have very high expectations, and have been relentless in their pursuit of these. They are ambitious for pupils, who are responding well to the goals set.

From Reception to Year 11, pupils show respect for each other. The school is a calm and orderly place, where pupils can learn without disruption.

Bullying is rare at the school, but when it takes place, staff deal with it effectively. The relative smallness of the school allows staff to know pupils well, and staff cater for pupils' emotional needs and well-being diligently. Pupils did not express concerns about bullying. They spoke of the school as 'a family' where they feel confident about sharing any worries with staff.

Leaders share pupils' pride in the uniqueness of the setting. They are building strong relationships with the community, and making the most of their surroundings. Reception children enjoy learning at the 'beach school'.

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

Leaders are developing a connected curriculum throughout the school. Teachers share their different expertise in primary and secondary education to ensure that learning provides the specific knowledge that pupils need. There is, in most cases, a better understanding of how knowledge develops as pupils progress through the curriculum. However, in some subjects, there is a lack of clarity about which concepts will deepen pupils' learning. Equally, there are some curriculums that do not include Reception yet.

Reading sits at the heart of the school's work. Children learn phonics from the outset. They are learning sounds and blending them into words quickly. When children struggle, there is immediate support to help them catch up. Teachers read to the younger pupils, which engages and stimulates them. Older pupils help to support the weaker younger readers. The English curriculum includes texts that expand pupils' vocabulary and understanding. Pupils read for pleasure in library lessons and tutor time, as well as at home. Staff guide primary pupils carefully, so that the books match the sounds they know. A new approach is being devised for older pupils. Pupils were reading, but not gaining a wider and more sophisticated vocabulary. Staff have addressed this in the changes. The school is working on an exciting local project with football clubs and Bournemouth University, to help resistant readers. It is too soon to comment on the impact of these changes.

Leaders provide well for pupils' personal development. Pupils benefit from enrichment through extra-curricular clubs, and learn about the principles of British

values with activities such as democratic elections for leadership posts. Pupils understand why tolerance is important. There is a comprehensive curriculum for pupils' personal, social, health and economic education. Leaders have thought strategically about what pupils need to know about relationships and when, although some aspects of the findings from the Ofsted sexual abuse review were not acted on swiftly enough. Pupils receive effective careers advice, and staff track the destinations of pupils when they leave. This avoids pupils not being in education, training or work. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships. Staff prepare pupils well for life in the modern world.

Teachers assess pupils regularly, in formal and informal ways. When teachers assess wisely, they help pupils to overcome misconceptions speedily and rectify misunderstandings. Skilful leaders use more formal assessments to gauge changes to the curriculum, so that pupils' learning progresses seamlessly. At times, though, pupils undertake assessments that are less useful and meaningful.

Disadvantaged pupils are doing well because of the considered focus on removing any barriers to their learning and emotional needs. Most teachers make reasonable adjustments to help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to access learning. At times, a few teachers have not paid enough attention to the specific support and resources pupils with SEND need in order to understand a problem or a concept.

At key stage 4, fewer pupils than average take the English Baccalaureate. This is because not enough pupils are pursuing a language option. Nonetheless, leaders have taken steps to increase the number of pupils taking languages at key stage 4. Pupils in key stage 2 have started studying a French curriculum, so that they can gain a greater depth of understanding over time. Pupils and staff are enthusiastic about this very recent change.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding leaders are fastidious in the care they provide to ensure pupils' welfare. They work closely with families, as well as pupils. When necessary, they liaise with agencies, such as social services and the local authority, to protect the most vulnerable. No stone is left unturned in their work.

Safer recruitment checks are done well. Staff receive suitable up-to-date training throughout the year.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, including online.

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

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

- The curriculum is developing as an all-through continuum. However, subject leaders need to consider which crucial concepts need to be emphasised to deepen pupils' knowledge, including for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. In this way, the curriculum will build more effectively on pupils' knowledge from Reception to key stage 4, and beyond.
- There are clear processes and timetables for formal assessment. However, assessment does not always provide information that is specific enough to improve pupils' knowledge, or amend misconceptions. More consideration of which assessment processes are needed and when, followed by effective evaluation, will inform more precisely the changes needed in the curriculum, and its implementation, to secure better retention of knowledge.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	145119
<b>Local authority</b>	Dorset
<b>Inspection number</b>	10212159
<b>Type of school</b>	All-through
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	781
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	James Pomeroy
<b>Principals</b>	Melissa Heppell and Lesley Bishop
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.atlantic-aspirations.org/">www.atlantic-aspirations.org/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The principals for primary and secondary were appointed in September 2019.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the two principals, senior leaders, the regional chief executive officer, the trust's national director of standards and education, and one trustee.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, early reading, mathematics, languages, history and drama. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons,

spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The lead inspector checked the recruitment processes, and spoke with the safeguarding leaders. Inspectors spoke with teachers, staff and pupils to gauge their understanding of safeguarding and keeping safe.
- Inspectors looked at the responses to Ofsted's survey, Parent View, and staff and pupil questionnaires.

### **Inspection team**

Kathy Maddocks, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lydia Pride	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sarah McGinnis	Her Majesty's Inspector
Caroline Dulon	Her Majesty's Inspector

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