

Inspection of Accrington Academy

Queens Road West, Accrington, Lancashire BB5 4FF

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 May 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, said that their school is a safe place where they can be themselves. They are happy to arrive at the start of the day and enjoy spending social times with their friends.

Pupils are positive about the supportive relationships that they forge with adults. They feel that staff will support and care for them. Pupils and students are confident that staff will listen to them if they have a problem.

Pupils behave well during lessons and at social times. Students in the sixth form are mature and respectful role models for their younger peers. Most pupils and students are confident that staff will challenge any discriminatory language and deal with bullying quickly and effectively.

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, appreciate the opportunities they have to take part in a range of clubs and extra-curricular activities. Many pupils take part in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

Leaders and teachers have high expectations of pupils' achievement. They have changed the curriculum so that all pupils study a broad range of subjects in depth at key stage 3. However, in key stages 3 and 4, these curriculums are not always delivered well enough by teachers. This prevents some pupils, especially those with special educational needs and/or abilities (SEND), from achieving as well as they should.

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

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum reflects their high aspirations for all pupils to learn the breadth and depth of knowledge they need across a range of subjects, including in key stage 3. Following the previous inspection, leaders have made the necessary changes to ensure that all pupils, including students in the sixth form, access an ambitious curriculum that meets their needs. Curriculum leaders, supported by the trust, are clear about the essential knowledge that they want pupils to know.

Leaders are determined to ensure that the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) suite of subjects is at the heart of the curriculum. All pupils have the opportunity to study geography, history and modern foreign languages in key stage 4. As a result, the number of pupils who study the EBacc is rising.

Although leaders are clear about the knowledge that pupils should learn, there is an unevenness across subjects in how well teachers can deliver subject curriculums. This is because some subject leaders are further on in their journey in skilling up teachers to deliver curriculums than others.

Teachers of students in the sixth form have an expert knowledge of their subjects. Mostly, teachers in the sixth form deliver subject curriculums well. This ensures that students can progress well through curriculums, deepening their knowledge of subjects over time.

Leaders have appropriate assessment systems in place. However, some teachers do not use assessment systems well enough to check that pupils' knowledge is secure before they move on to new learning. This is particularly the case at key stage 3. As a result, some pupils have misconceptions in their learning, and they struggle to build on earlier knowledge. This prevents pupils from achieving as well as they should.

In the sixth form, leaders and teachers use assessment well to help students embed and use knowledge fluently. Teachers check students' understanding systematically to inform their teaching. This ensures that students can build securely on their prior knowledge.

Leaders have ensured that the systems used to identify the additional needs of pupils with SEND are increasingly effective. As a result, teachers now have access to appropriate information that helps them better meet this group of pupils' needs. However, not all teachers have had sufficient training to use this information to adapt the delivery of the curriculum for pupils with SEND. This means that some pupils with SEND do not receive the support that they need to access ambitious subject curriculums.

Leaders promote the importance of reading. For example, all pupils read ambitious texts as part of their form-time programme. Leaders have started to roll out strategies to support those pupils who are behind in their reading. However, some of this support is not focused enough to help these pupils catch up quickly. This means that some pupils do not have the reading knowledge that they need to access the curriculum.

In most lessons, pupils and students behave well. Leaders have ensured that clear systems are in place to help teachers manage pupils' behaviour. From time to time, some staff do not apply these systems consistently and there are a few occasions when pupils' learning is disrupted by the behaviour of their peers. However, leaders are well on their way to addressing this issue.

Leaders have overhauled the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum at key stage 3 to ensure that it helps to prepare pupils for issues that they may face in later life. In key stage 4 and in the sixth form, leaders are prioritising the delivery of key elements that pupils did not cover in depth due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, pupils and students learn about the key features of healthy relationships and how to look after their own mental health. Pupils value the opportunities that they have to develop their character and confidence, for example by becoming a school leader or anti-bullying ambassador.

Governors and trustees support and challenge leaders well. Staff are overwhelmingly positive and appreciative of leaders' support for their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a culture of safeguarding. Pupils benefit from the strong pastoral support available and the positive relationships that they have with staff.

All staff receive appropriate safeguarding training to ensure that they remain alert to potential signs of harm and neglect. Staff are confident in using leaders' systems to report concerns promptly regarding pupils who may be at risk of harm.

Through the PSHE curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils in key stage 4 learn about the dangers of alcohol and drug misuse.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not use the information that they receive about pupils with SEND to adapt how they deliver the curriculum for this group of pupils. This means that some pupils with SEND do not achieve as highly as they should. Leaders should ensure that all staff are suitably trained to use the information that they have to adapt the delivery of the curriculum and meet the needs of pupils with SEND.
- Teachers' delivery of the curriculums is uneven across subjects. Some teachers do not use leaders' assessment systems effectively to check how well pupils are learning the content of the curriculum and identify their misconceptions. This hinders pupils from achieving as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that teachers are well trained to deliver the subject curriculums and to use assessment strategies effectively to address misconceptions or gaps in pupils' learning.
- Pupils at the early stages of learning to read are not sufficiently supported to gain the knowledge they need to read fluently. This is because the implementation of reading strategies to support these pupils are still in their early stages. Leaders should ensure that they continue to develop and embed support strategies for those at the early stages of reading, so that all pupils can develop fluency and confidence in reading and are able to fully access the curriculum.

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	135649
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10200822
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1098
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	124
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Peter Cox
Headteacher	James Kerfoot
Website	www.accrington-academy.org/
Date of previous inspection	2 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of United Learning multi-academy trust.
- The school makes use of two registered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has appointed a new chair of governors and several new governors to the local governing body.
- Since the last inspection, there have been considerable changes to the leadership of the school, including the appointment of a new headteacher, a new senior leadership team and several new subject leaders.
- 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.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection that 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 headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and a range of staff. The lead inspector spoke with two representatives of the local governing body and the regional director of the trust.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with the director of secondary education for The United Learning Trust.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative from the local authority.
- As part of this inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in English, science, history, geography and modern foreign languages. Inspectors met with subject leaders, visited some lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils and teachers.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from a range of year groups. Inspectors also observed and spoke to pupils at social times.
- Inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders and reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, self-evaluation documents, external quality assurance documents and attendance and behaviour records.
- Inspectors checked on the school's safeguarding arrangements, including the recruitment checks made on staff. Inspectors met with leaders, staff, pupils and governors to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding in school. An inspector checked the arrangements for those pupils who attend alternative provision.

Inspection team

Amanda Downing, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alan Hammersley	Ofsted Inspector
Thomas Fay	Ofsted Inspector
David Woolley	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