

Inspection of ASPIRE Centre, King's Leadership Academy Liverpool

Dingle Vale, Dingle, Liverpool L8 9SJ

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 September 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils recognise and value the fresh start that the ASPIRE Centre provides. They enjoy the supportive relationships that they make with dedicated staff. This helps pupils to feel safe and happy. Pupils appreciate spending social times with their friends. This includes when they eat alongside peers and staff during family dining time.

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), improve their attitudes to learning over time. This is because leaders set high expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour.

Pupils can show signs of low-level disruption. However, this rarely interrupts learning. This is because staff challenge any signs of poor behaviour in a carefully considered way. Pupils told inspectors that staff deal with bullying quickly and effectively.

Pupils enjoy taking part in visits locally and far from home. Pupils recalled with enthusiasm gorge walking and climbing in Wales. They visited Liverpool and took a boat trip on the River Mersey. These opportunities further enhance pupils' resilience and social skills. Pupils develop their leadership skills as part of the Combined Cadet Force.

Pupils study a broad range of subjects. However, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This is because the early reading curriculum is underdeveloped. Some curriculums are not delivered well enough by teachers.

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

Pupils at the ASPIRE Centre have experienced significant disruption to their education. Many pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, have been permanently excluded before they join the school. Leaders focus on improving pupils' education and, where appropriate, their return to mainstream education.

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum matches the ambition of the national curriculum. The curriculum identifies the knowledge that pupils will learn. This reduces the chance that pupils form gaps in their knowledge while at the ASPIRE Centre. Leaders have thought carefully about the qualifications on offer. These match closely to pupils' aspirations for the future. For example, pupils can gain accreditation in vocational subjects such as health and social care, sport and hair and beauty.

Leaders have acted to ensure that pupils' love of reading improves. However, pupils display different levels of enthusiasm for reading. For those who can read with fluency and confidence, leaders have ensured that the curriculum is ambitious. This includes the use of age-appropriate texts. Pupils enjoy listening to staff reading a

range of engaging novels. This helps to develop pupils' comprehension and vocabulary.

Leaders have not ensured that pupils at the early stages of reading become confident and fluent readers. There is no systematic approach to supporting these pupils to learn to read. Leaders do not assess pupils' phonics knowledge well enough. Pupils have limited access to books that match their phonics knowledge. As a result, they do not catch up as quickly as they should.

Teachers and staff use checks on pupils' learning during lessons to identify pupils' SEND. However, leaders do not clearly identify pupils' starting points when they join the ASPIRE Centre. Pupils' support programmes do not state the aims of the placement in sufficient detail. In turn, some pupils' SEND support documents do not identify what they find difficult and the support that they require. Consequently, teachers do not use the most effective strategies to support these pupils to access the curriculum.

Pupils respond well to leaders' high expectations for behaviour and conduct. Most pupils work hard. Parents and carers told inspectors that they appreciate the support offered by staff. They recognise improvements in their children's behaviour both in school and at home.

Some pupils do not attend school often enough. That said, leaders ensure that most pupils improve their attendance over time.

Leaders provide pupils with a range of personal development opportunities. These include useful impartial careers information advice and guidance. Pupils attend appropriate work experience placements. They learn about healthy relationships, different types of families and life in modern Britain.

New trust leaders have acted swiftly to improve the quality of education in the school. This includes strengthening their oversight of the school through the establishment of a dedicated local academy council (LAC). However, governors and leaders do not have a detailed knowledge of alternative provision. This limits their ability to hold leaders to account.

Staff told inspectors that leaders consider their workload carefully. Senior leaders are approachable and supportive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive useful and regular safeguarding training. This ensures that they are acutely aware of any signs of abuse or neglect. Staff know how to report concerns. Leaders respond to concerns quickly and appropriately.

Leaders work closely with families and external agencies when required, for example to ensure that pupils are safe when they are not in school.

Leaders are alert to local safeguarding issues. They use this knowledge well to shape the curriculum. For example, pupils learn about the dangers of criminal exploitation and knife crime. They learn how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not ensured that some pupils' needs, such as those recorded in commissioning agreements and SEND support documents, are suitably specific. As a result, pupils do not receive the support that they need to access the curriculum as well as they should. Leaders must ensure that pupils' needs are clearly identified and that pupils receive the bespoke support that they need to access the curriculum as well as they should.
- Leaders have not embedded a systematic approach to the teaching of early reading. This means that some pupils do not learn to read as quickly as they should. Leaders should ensure that staff receive suitable training and support to confidently deliver a suitable early reading curriculum effectively.
- Some leaders, including governors of the recently formed LAC, do not have a sufficient understanding of effective policy and practice in relation to alternative provision. This limits their ability to hold leaders and staff to account. Trust leaders should ensure that leaders and governors receive appropriate training that allows them to hold leaders to account for their actions.

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.

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	143746
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10241427
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	18
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Joe Spencer
Principal	Mark O'Hagan (Executive Principal)
Website	www.aspireliverpool.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school provides education for pupils who have been or are at risk of permanent exclusion.
- Places are commissioned by either Liverpool City Council or individual schools, in liaison with ASPIRE Centre school leaders.
- The school is part of the Great Schools Trust. A new chief executive officer (CEO) was appointed in September 2021.
- There have been changes to the senior leadership team at the school during the last academic year. The executive principal of the school is also responsible for leading another school in the multi-academy trust.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.
- 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 graded 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 completed deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and art and design. They met with subject leaders, visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work and spoke to teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors also met with the leaders for other subjects, reviewed pupils' work and evaluated the curriculums.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation. The lead inspector spoke to the executive principal and senior leaders throughout the inspection.
- The lead inspector met remotely with the chair of the LAC and the trust director of governance. He also met with the CEO and other leaders from the Great Schools Trust. The lead inspector spoke with the chair of the Great Schools Trust by telephone.
- The lead inspector spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the staff responsible for safeguarding and scrutinised the single central record. Inspectors considered leaders' safeguarding processes and procedures. They observed pupils during lessons, breaktimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors discussed safeguarding with pupils and staff.
- There were no responses to Ofsted Parent View, or the staff or pupil surveys.
- An inspector spoke to parents by telephone to gather their views about the school.

Inspection team

Adam Sproston, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Linda Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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