

Inspection of a good school: Airedale Academy

Crewe Road, Airedale, Castleford, West Yorkshire WF10 3JU

Inspection dates:

29 and 30 November 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

'Ambition, bravery and respect' are the shared values of Airedale Academy. Pupils and staff understand these values. They can explain how the school puts them into practice. Leaders at the school want the very best for the pupils. Many staff go the extra mile to provide wider opportunities beyond the curriculum. They do this because they know that some pupils lack the opportunity for cultural experiences and trips beyond the local area. An example of this is the commitment to enrichment opportunities and educational visits, every summer, known as 'Airedale on tour'. Pupils appreciate these opportunities, and they take advantage of them.

Pupils trust the adults in school, and they feel safe. Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Pupils enjoy their lessons. They work hard and participate.

The majority of pupils are well behaved. The school has a clear behaviour policy that staff apply consistently. However, some pupils need more guidance and support to meet the expectations of leaders. Although there is some bullying, most pupils believe teachers deal with it effectively.

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

Leaders have planned a curriculum with breadth and ambition. The opportunities this curriculum offers are open to all, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Along with the core subjects, the curriculum at key stage 3 gives pupils a broad experience of the arts, humanities and languages. At key stage 4, all pupils can study a range of subjects, which are collectively known as the 'English Baccalaureate'. All pupils take either history or geography at GCSE; fewer pupils take a language. The small sixth form caters for students who want to study an extended diploma in either business studies, health and social care or performing arts.

Learning is logically organised. There is a particular emphasis on widening pupils' vocabulary to support their understanding of key ideas. The school calls this a 'vocabulary vault'. This is an important part of the curriculum, but leaders know there is more to do to ensure that pupils can remember this knowledge and then apply it effectively.

Leaders and teachers recognise the importance of accurate assessment. There has been an investment in staff training in this area. There are many examples of teachers using assessment to gauge accurately what pupils know and understand. However, some teachers move learning on while some pupils still have misconceptions. Teachers need to use assessment in the classroom more effectively.

Leaders have prioritised reading. They believe that this will have a positive impact on pupils' education. There are clear systems in place to assess reading. Support for weaker readers to improve their reading fluency and comprehension is in place. Tutor time in the morning involves reading activities for all pupils to develop their love of reading. This is having a positive impact.

Most pupils attend school regularly, including those in the sixth form. However, a significant minority of pupils have poor attendance. The school uses a range of strategies to promote good attendance and follow up absence. Attendance is a priority for leaders. Some pupils are still absent from school too much. Leaders recognise that these pupils must attend regularly to benefit from what the school has to offer.

Most pupils are able to follow the routines of good behaviour very well. Behaviour in lessons is good. There is a small, but significant, minority of pupils who need more support to improve their behaviour. Some of these pupils also have additional sanctions, such as suspension. Suspensions and the use of the behaviour referral space do interrupt the learning of the curriculum for these pupils. Leaders make some adjustments to the behaviour policy for individual pupils. For example, they use a range of external agencies to support pupils with social and emotional difficulties that may be affecting their behaviour. In most cases, this is effective, and leaders are working to reduce the incidence of suspensions.

The school makes a considerable effort to provide wider opportunities for pupils. There are many trips and educational visits available. The school ensures these opportunities are available to everyone. 'Airedale on tour' is the programme of summer trips. Pupils and staff look forward to this event and an additional winter tour is being planned. During the inspection, pupils were very positive about a recent careers fair and the quality of careers guidance. They understood about the range of jobs and further education opportunities open to them.

Many of the staff and the governors have close links to the local community. As a result, they are very committed to the school and they show ambition for the pupils. Staff report that they are proud to work at the school. Teachers have had the opportunity to receive additional training and to work with other schools to develop the curriculum. Teachers say that leaders have supported them in their professional development and are mindful of their well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There are good systems in place to safeguard pupils. Safeguarding information is shared appropriately and effectively. Staff are well trained to understand the risks that pupils face, particularly those issues in the local area. The school has safer recruitment practices in place.

Leaders draw on support from a wide range of external agencies. These agencies support safeguarding and other problems pupils face, such as mental health and well-being. Pupils know where to seek help and support. There is a designated safeguarding area in school, which provides pupils with security and privacy to raise any concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the curriculum is not deepening students' knowledge effectively enough. Pupils often have a superficial understanding of the key knowledge. Leaders need to ensure that teaching is focused on developing a deeper understanding so that pupils can make connections in their learning and work in greater depth.
- The attendance of some pupils is not high enough. Leaders are aware of this, and there are a number of strategies in place to encourage good attendance. Leaders should maintain their focus on finding the most effective measures to improve attendance and therefore access to the curriculum. This should include considering how pupils who are subject to behaviour sanctions, such as suspension, or those pupils who are temporarily in alternative provision can keep up and catch up with their work.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2017.

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	136613
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10240450
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	1,039
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	45
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Rob Hall
Principal	Lyndsey Proctor
Website	www.airedaleacademy.com/
Date of previous inspection	29 September 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A small number of pupils attend one of three registered alternative providers used by the school.
- Some further pupils attend one of five unregistered alternative providers used by the school.

Information about this inspection

- 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 CEO, the headteacher, other senior leaders and subject leaders.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, geography, business studies and French. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, 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 met with the designated safeguarding lead to discuss the arrangements for safeguarding. Throughout the inspection, both inspectors discussed safeguarding with a wide range of staff and pupils.
- A range of other meetings and activities took place to check the work of the school in some aspects of personal development and behaviour. For example, inspectors asked staff about their workload, and asked pupils about behaviour, bullying and careers education.
- The lead inspector spoke on the phone to one of the alternative providers used by the school.
- Inspectors read a range of school documents. These included the school development plan, the school's self-evaluation, attendance information, behaviour and safeguarding logs and minutes of the meetings of the governing board.
- Through Ofsted's surveys, the views of staff, pupils and parents were taken into consideration during the inspection.

Inspection team

Carl Sugden, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Erica Hiorns

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