

Inspection of a good school: Aspire Academy

351 Annandale Road, Preston Road, Kingston-upon-Hull HU9 5DE

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 December 2022

Outcome

Aspire Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Aspire Academy is a welcoming and inclusive school. Pupils experience a learning environment that is well resourced and designed to meet their needs. The school is calm and orderly. Pupils that need help to manage their behaviour are well supported by staff.

Leaders ensure that staff have high aspirations for pupils' development. Pupils experience a broad curriculum that meets their academic and individual special educational needs and/or disabilities in the main. Pupils engage with lessons well. Pupils learn about healthy lifestyles and are taught strategies that support their positive mental health. Leaders ensure that pupils experience a wide variety of personal development opportunities. Some pupils have visited other countries, such as Poland and China, to learn about different cultures, for example.

Relationships between staff and pupils are highly secure. Pupils are well supported by staff, who listen to their worries or concerns. Most pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school. Pupils say that bullying is not an issue in school. They say that they know staff would deal with it quickly if it were to occur.

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

Leaders have high expectations of pupils. The academic curriculum generally matches the rigour of the national curriculum and ensures that pupils are well prepared for GCSEs. In a few subjects, however, curriculum plans for key stage 3 pupils are less strong. Subject content is not stretching enough. In these subjects, key stage 4 plans are much more ambitious. Leaders are aware of this. Plans are in place to ensure that key stage 3 planning consistently matches the strength of key stage 4.

Leaders prioritise reading and ensure that pupils read regularly. Pupils that need support to develop their reading skills and comprehension are well supported. They receive regular reading intervention that includes the teaching of phonics. As pupils become

confident readers, they move on to focused lessons to develop reading comprehension. Staff encourage pupils to read more challenging texts, including Shakespeare.

Around school, there is a caring and supportive atmosphere. Staff greet pupils at the school gate positively. Pupils eat breakfast with staff during morning registration and talk through any concerns they may have. This ensures that pupils settle quickly for the day ahead. Pupils are welcoming to visitors. They hold doors open and are polite. Pupils are happy to show off their work. Staff use rewards and verbal praise well. If ever pupils do not meet leaders' high behaviour expectations, staff intervene quickly to maintain a calm and safe environment.

Pupils' wider development is well thought out. Leaders ensure that pupils experience a range of opportunities that prepare them for adulthood and their next steps. This includes external careers guidance. Pupils are sensitively taught how to keep themselves safe and maintain healthy lifestyles. 'What I should know' lessons take place on a weekly basis. They provide an effective response to emerging matters that pupils may face in school or in the community.

Alternative provision is used to support a small number of pupils for specific lessons during the school week. This enables these pupils to access a curriculum that is unavailable in school. Leaders ensure that the curriculum and wider support pupils receive from the alternative provision meets their needs. Leaders are in frequent contact with alternative providers and staff undertake regular visits. These pupils' daily attendance and welfare are closely monitored by school staff.

Governors rigorously hold leaders to account for the performance of the school. They provide expertise and challenge that leaders value. The governing body works well with the board of trustees. Between both, there is effective two-way communication that supports school improvement. Staff feel well supported by leaders and are happy to work at the school. They believe that their workload is streamlined, and they appreciate leaders' clarity around what is expected of them. Staff believe leaders are mindful of their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that there is a culture of vigilance in school. Staff are well trained and receive regular updates through a weekly safeguarding bulletin. Staff are aware of the risks that pupils face in the community. Record-keeping is detailed. Safeguarding reports are followed up thoroughly and in a timely manner. Safeguarding leaders work well with key stakeholders, including the police and social services to ensure pupils are kept safe.

Pupils feel safe in school. They know adults will support them effectively if needed. The arrangements for keeping pupils safe who attend alternative provision are secure.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, curriculum plans for key stage 3 pupils are less strong. This means some parts of the key stage 3 curriculum are not as ambitious as the key stage 4 curriculum. Leaders are developing their key stage 3 curriculum to match the strength of the key stage 4 curriculum. Leaders should continue to develop key stage 3 planning to ensure it matches the ambitions that are realised in key stage 4.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 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	141037
Local authority	Kingston Upon Hull City Council
Inspection number	10240609
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	10 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	158
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tony Myers
Chair of governing body	Lynn Benton
Principal	Stacey Ward
Website	https://asp.hslt.academy
Date of previous inspection	13 October 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Aspire Academy is an alternative provision for pupils aged between 10 and 16 years. A large proportion of pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is part of the Hope Sentamu Learning Trust.
- The school uses four unregistered alternative provision providers.

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 executive principal, principal, members of the senior leadership team, curriculum leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met the chair of trustees, other trustees, the chair of the governing body and governors. They also met the chief executive officer from the trust.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The provision for teaching reading was also scrutinised.
- The lead inspector met with the school's designated safeguarding lead. The inspector reviewed the school's safeguarding records, relevant policies and other safeguarding documentation. The inspector reviewed the processes leaders use to identify and help pupils who need support. In addition, the inspector scrutinised the school's records of checks carried out on adults who work at the school.
- Inspectors visited lessons across the school, including activities at the start of day and lunchtime.
- The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils formally and informally, including pupils who receive support to improve their reading.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- The inspection team spoke to staff about their workload and pupils' behaviour in the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils, staff and parents. This included any free-text responses.

Inspection team

David Mills, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jenny Thomas

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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