

Inspection of Preston School Academy

Monks Dale, Yeovil, Somerset BA21 3JD

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 January 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders at Preston School Academy are ambitious for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders encourage pupils to be aspirational. Pupils strive to do their best. The school is an inclusive community where pupils are happy.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. The clear routines of the 'Preston Way' minimise low-level disruption in lessons. Pupils say that bullying is rare. They have confidence in staff to deal with any incidents effectively. Therefore, pupils feel safe. However, at times, pupils use derogatory language, which staff are unaware of.

Pupils appreciate the school's reward system, which recognises showing positive character traits, such as resilience. Pupils value learning about how to manage their finances and hearing what skills employers look for. Pupils share their views with leaders through the 'Preston Parliament' and anti-discriminatory groups. They say there is always someone they can talk to. Parents agree, and say that their children are well cared for.

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

The school provides a wide and varied curriculum. Its theme is enterprise with the intent to 'bring learning to life and life to learning'. The number of pupils who study the English Baccalaureate subjects remain below government goals but are increasing steadily.

Leaders have planned carefully what pupils need to learn. They have ordered the content of each subject logically. This means that pupils build their understanding effectively over time. However, in some subjects, the content of the curriculum is not clearly detailed.

Leaders provide teachers with clear information about pupils with SEND. This enables teachers to plan precisely the support pupils with SEND need to learn well. Teachers use a range of strategies to check what pupils know and remember. They use this information effectively to plan what pupils do next.

The curriculum for pupils with SEND who attend the school's autism base is ambitious. It is carefully and appropriately adapted to suit their needs. Some of these pupils also attend mainstream lessons. Staff are well trained. Pupils who attend the base enjoy school and are well prepared for what they do next.

Leaders ensure that reading is an important part of the school's curriculum. Pupils enjoy reading a diverse range of texts, guided by their academic mentors. Pupils develop confidence in reading aloud. Pupils at the early stages of learning to read receive effective help to catch up quickly.

Pupils enjoy their lessons. They want to succeed. When moving around the school site, most pupils are sensible and well-mannered, although, sometimes, a minority of pupils do not behave as well.

The curriculum for pupils' wider development is effective. Pupils learn important content, including knife and gang crime, online safety, drugs and alcohol awareness, relationships and the protected characteristics. They learn about religions, beliefs and cultures that may be different to their own.

The careers programme is a strength of the school. Links with local employers help pupils take part in high-quality work experience. Additional activities which enrich the curriculum include sporting clubs, music and drama. For example, pupils enjoyed being involved in a recent school performance of 'Matilda'. However, leaders do not monitor who attends these extra-curricular activities.

Since the previous inspection, governors have increased their understanding of the school's priorities. With leaders, they act effectively on feedback concerning staff's well-being. As a result, staff talk positively about their workload. Support and guidance from the trust have also led to improvements in areas such as assessment.

Staff generally receive appropriate training. However, leaders do not provide enough training to increase staff's subject knowledge.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. This allows staff to identify any concerns about a pupil quickly and to secure the help needed. Pupils understand risks to their safety and seek advice from a trusted adult in school. Leaders work effectively with external services when required.

The system for recording safeguarding incidents and concerns is generally effective. However, leaders do not always evaluate safeguarding patterns in the school over time.

All staff, including governors, receive appropriate safeguarding training. Effective recruitment systems ensure staff are suitable to work with children. Any allegations against staff are handled promptly and in line with school and trust policies.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The professional development programme for staff provides limited opportunities for developing subject expertise. As a result, staff sometimes have gaps or lack depth in their understanding of some areas of the curriculum. Leaders should ensure they provide regular opportunities for staff to develop their knowledge of curriculum content.
- While safeguarding is effective, leaders could get a clearer picture of emerging trends across the school. Leaders should consider more systematic ways to analyse patterns around safeguarding. This will assist leaders in their evaluation and planning.

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

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| Unique reference number | 136894 |
| Local authority | Somerset |
| Inspection number | 10257094 |
| Type of school | Secondary comprehensive |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 958 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Stuart Warrener |
| Headteacher | Gregg Morrison |
| Website | www.prestonschool.co.uk |
| Dates of previous inspection | 25 and 26 June 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the school has joined the Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership multi-academy trust.
- The school has an on-site SEND resource base for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. At present, 16 pupils have places commissioned by the local authority.
- The school currently uses three registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement 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 held discussions with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator, curriculum leaders, the chief executive officer of the trust and a group of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography, history and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record of adults working in the school. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to consider how well the school identifies pupils who are at risk and engages with external services. Inspectors also spoke with a range of pupils and staff about safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents and carers, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also considered responses to the staff survey and responses to the survey for pupils.

Inspection team

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|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
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