

Inspection of Atlantic Academy

Bucks Cross, Bideford, Devon EX39 5DW

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 February 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending Atlantic Academy. They are polite and welcoming. Leaders ensure that there are high expectations for pupils in everything they do. Pupils appreciate this. They learn well in a respectful environment.

Pupils have clear routines which they follow throughout the day. There are simple systems in place for when a pupil does not follow procedures correctly. Pupils reflect on what is the right thing to do. As a result, there is an orderly and calm feel to the school. They show care when using community spaces at break and lunchtime to eat and socialise. Pupils enjoy spending time together making models or playing chess.

Pupils feel safe. Staff know pupils well. Bullying is rare and not tolerated. When it does occur, staff deal with it swiftly and effectively. Staff ensure that pupils receive the support they need, which stops any recurrence.

There are a range of clubs at lunchtime, many of which support key stage 4 studies. There are some sports and computing clubs, too. However, pupils say they would like more clubs that better reflect their talents and interests.

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

Leaders have a clear vision for the school. They are determined to improve outcomes for pupils. Previously published outcomes do not reflect the quality of education that pupils are now receiving. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to study the full range of subjects in the English Baccalaureate in key stage 4. More pupils now choose to study these than in the past. Leaders have reflected on the curriculum and changed it where necessary. They have sequenced the curriculum effectively so that pupils continually build on prior learning and embed knowledge.

Teachers use their subject knowledge well. In this small school, some teachers specialise in several subjects. They are adept in managing this. Teachers have received training so that they communicate learning effectively to pupils. There are above-average numbers of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers skilfully engage these pupils. Every pupil keeps up with the taught curriculum. However, sometimes some pupils struggle to explain their learning in a meaningful way.

Teachers check pupils' learning continually. Teachers adapt learning when necessary. When there are any gaps in pupils' knowledge, teachers support pupils to close them. This is particularly successful when pupils arrive at the school during the course of the academic year rather than at the start.

Helping pupils become fluent readers is a priority in the school. Many pupils, in both key stages 3 and 4, are not fluent readers when they arrive. Leaders have

introduced programmes, including phonics, to support pupils. It is too soon to know what will happen, but some pupils are making significant improvements already. In key stage 3, teachers read a range of texts to pupils. This enriches pupils' understanding of diversity, culture, traditions and current issues. Pupils enjoy this experience and develop a love of reading. There is not the same focus in key stage 4 yet.

Pupils' attitudes to their education are becoming more positive. They commit to their learning as there are fewer distractions due to leaders' work to improve behaviour. Despite this, too many pupils do not attend school on a regular basis. Recently, leaders put more thorough systems in place to make sure pupils attend. Staff check for absentees daily and do everything possible to get pupils into school. As a result, there are improvements in attendance already, especially for pupils with education, health and care plans.

Leaders have put in place a well-planned and delivered personal, social, health and economic curriculum. Pupils receive effective careers advice. They benefit from hearing visitors from business and former pupils talk to them about their careers. Pupils understand about the importance of consent due to their relationships, health and sex education. They are learning about their physical changes taking place, too.

Governors understand their roles well. Together, with support from the trust, they are making rapid improvements. Leaders are aware of, and take account of, the main pressures that staff face. They are realistic and constructive in the way they manage staff, including their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The designated safeguarding leads are vigilant in their duties and protect pupils. Staff receive regular and up-to-date training. They know how to identify and report any concerns about pupils who may be vulnerable. Leaders make sure that external support is provided at the right level to keep pupils safe.

Recruitment checks are undertaken thoroughly.

The school has suitable policies in place to raise awareness among staff and parents about the dangers of sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and sexual violence.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Too many pupils do not attend regularly. As a result, they are missing important learning as well as getting into poor habits about coming to school. Leaders must ensure that more pupils attend as a matter of urgency.

- Many pupils arrive at the school who are not yet fluent readers. This impedes their learning as they cannot access the curriculum. Leaders must ensure they maintain the implementation of supportive packages, including phonics, so that pupils quickly become fluent readers.

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	146567
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10256597
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	262
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Elaine Marshall
Principal	Lynsey Slater
Website	www.atlanticacademy.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Atlantic Academy free school opened in September 2013. When its predecessor school, Route 39 Academy, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall.
- The school became part of the Athena multi-academy trust, previously called Launceston College Academy Trust, in September 2018.
- The principal was appointed in February 2018.
- 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.
- The school uses three registered alternative provisions and one unregistered provider.

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 chief executive officer, the chair of the local governing body and other members of the multi-academy trust, the headteacher, the deputy headteachers, staff and pupils. The lead inspector had a phone conversation with the chair of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, art and history. 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.
- Inspectors looked at the single central record and discussed case studies of vulnerable pupils with the designated safeguarding lead. They spoke to staff and pupils about the training and education they had received about keeping safe.
- Inspectors took account of responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the results of the staff and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

Kathy Maddocks, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Gill Hickling

Ofsted Inspector

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