

Inspection of Armfield Academy

488 Lytham Road, Blackpool, Lancashire FY4 1TL

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
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at this school and feel safe around the site. They know that there are adults who they can talk to for help or advice if needed. Pupils value the strong relationships between adults and pupils in this school.

Pupils understand what is expected of them through the 'Armfield Way'. They know that leaders have high aspirations for their achievement and for their behaviour around the site. Most pupils meet these expectations, but there is an effective behaviour policy in place to support those that find it difficult to behave. Pupils, and children in the early years, learn well.

Staff act quickly when there are any concerns about bullying. They said that leaders will listen to their ideas. Pupils told inspectors that they have enjoyed having opportunities to shape the way the new school has developed.

Pupils enjoy the extensive activities that they can get involved with and the trips to see local points of interest. Pupils have been engaged in raising money for a wide range of charities. They enjoy taking part in opportunities to contribute to their local community.

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

Leaders and trustees have created a clear and ambitious vision for this school and its role in the local community. Staff and pupils understand and support this vision. As part of this vision leaders have given high priority to providing pupils with information about possible careers and the next steps they may need to take to achieve them. Most pupils value the information with which they have been provided.

Leaders have created a clearly designed curriculum, which builds from when children join in their Reception Year through to the end of Year 11. Staff focus on ensuring that pupils have strong foundations in their learning before moving on. This is particularly true in the primary phase of learning. As pupils move through the school, there is some variability in how the ambitious curriculum is delivered. Leaders have well-developed plans in place to tackle this.

Teachers use day-to-day assessment effectively in order to identify the gaps in pupils' learning. They use this information to identify what they need to revisit or reinforce future learning. Leaders have not yet fully established an effective approach to assessment across the school so that the information it provides can fully inform decisions about the way the curriculum is delivered.

Leaders have a clear system in place to identify pupils who may have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This includes the involvement of the class teachers, who know the pupils well. This helps to tailor the support offered to meet the needs of the pupils. Key information is shared with all of the staff who

teach the pupils so that they can apply this in their choice of activities. Access to the curriculum is adapted so that pupils with SEND cover the same ambitious content as their peers.

Leaders have recently changed their approach to early reading. They have ensured that staff are fully trained in the systematic synthetic phonics programme, and that it is delivered with a consistent approach. Reading starts as soon as pupils join Reception, with opportunities for exposure to books and sounds in the Nursery setting. Leaders have used assessment in reading effectively in order to identify where pupils need support to keep up and catch up. Support is ensuring that pupils do not fall behind in reading. There is a similar approach in the secondary phase to support pupils who find reading difficult. Intervention is used effectively to support pupils to become confident and fluent readers.

Children in the early years have an effective environment to help them develop. There are a range of opportunities to practise the learning, including opportunities to choose activities for themselves and more focused sessions with adult support. This includes developing their number skills for early mathematics.

Since the pandemic, attendance at this school has not been as high as leaders would like for some groups of pupils. Those pupils who are disadvantaged are absent too often. Leaders have a range of strategies in place to support these pupils. They have improved the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, but some pupils do not attend school often enough.

Some pupils have found it difficult to return to the routines of school. Leaders have set out clear expectations for behaviour, to help them to understand how to conduct themselves in school. Pupils are clear on what is expected of them and the consequences if they do not meet the expectations. Learning is rarely disrupted by poor behaviour from pupils.

Leaders have provided a wide range of opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities, including activities such as the school council and student leadership teams. Staff provide a selection of after-school clubs, particularly in a range of sports, to give pupils opportunities to try out new activities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff know their pupils and families well. They notice and record any changes that may be signs of concern for pupils' well-being. Staff are well trained and know what to do if pupils may be at risk of harm. They report concerns promptly.

Leaders work with a wide range of agencies to secure help for those pupils and families that need it.

They bring appropriate colleagues into school to help pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe. Leaders ensure that pupils are fully aware of local risks.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, do not attend school often enough. This means that they are not able to access the ambitious curriculum that leaders have planned. Leaders should ensure that pupils attend school regularly.
- There is variance in how assessment information is used to inform the decisions that are made about curriculum delivery. This means that in some subjects the activities chosen to deliver the ambitious curriculum are not best suited to pupils' needs. Leaders should ensure that teachers have sufficient knowledge and training of how to use assessment to inform their pedagogical choices.

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	145863
Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	10244620
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	3 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1114
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Joel Arber
Headteacher	Mark Kilmurray
Website	www.armfieldacademy.co.uk

Information about this school

- The school has been a member of the Fylde Coast Academy Trust since the school opened in September 2018.
- Leaders use four registered and two unregistered providers of alternative provision for a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 11 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 that the school had 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.
- As part of this inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, history, English, modern foreign languages and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders,

visited some lessons, spoke with pupils and teachers, and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors heard pupils read to a trusted adult.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the special educational needs team, subject leaders and teachers. The lead inspector also spoke to the chief executive officer of the trust and with a representative from the local authority.
- The lead inspector met with governors, including the vice-chair of trustees.
- Inspectors checked safeguarding procedures, including the recruitment checks made on staff. Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead, staff and pupils to discuss wider aspects of safeguarding. They scrutinised a range of documentation relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including documentation relating to the curriculum, pupils' behaviour, improvement plans and leaders' self-evaluation.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in a range of situations, including in corridors, at breaktimes, at lunchtimes and in lessons. They also spoke with pupils about behaviour and bullying.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their programme of wider personal development.
- Inspectors considered the responses from parents and carers to Ofsted Parent View. This included the comments submitted via the free-text facility.
- Inspectors also spoke to parents at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Elaine Mawson, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
David Roberts	Ofsted Inspector
John Hanley	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Kirkpatrick	Ofsted Inspector
Kevin Flanagan	Ofsted Inspector

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