

Inspection of a good school: Reach Academy

The Field Hill Centre, Batley Field Hill, Batley, West Yorkshire WF17 0BQ

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 February 2023

Outcome

Reach Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils say that coming to school makes them feel safe. Leaders and staff recognise the many challenges that pupils face outside school and work closely with parents to keep pupils safe.

Pupils quickly learn that staff are 'on their team' and trusting relationships between staff and pupils flourish. These close relationships help pupils learn as well as understand how to successfully manage their behaviour.

Leaders and staff are ambitious that pupils will be successful learners during their time in school. Many pupils have missed school in the past. Some pupils find reading hard when they arrive at school. The mantra, 'If you can't read it's harder to learn' is understood by staff and pupils. Phonics lessons are now in place, and they help pupils to learn how to read and make up for lost time if they need this.

Staff, leaders and the school dog greet pupils each morning. A cheerful 'Hello' often helps pupils to relax and put behind them the issues they have faced since they were last in school. This meet and greet also helps staff to recognise how pupils are feeling. This enables staff to offer the right support during form time to help pupils make a successful start to the school day.

Pupils spoken to recognise bullying does happen occasionally. They know what to do if it happens and say staff are good at dealing with any incidents that may occur.

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

Pupils join the school for a variety of reasons. Approximately one third of pupils attend for 12 weeks in order to help them to learn how to manage their behaviour more effectively. Others join the school after being permanently excluded from their own school. Two thirds of the school's population make up this latter group.

Pupils' abilities are accurately assessed when they arrive. They are then placed on an educational pathway which is designed to meet both their educational and social and emotional needs. For example, in pathway one, pupils continue to receive a curriculum similar to that found in most mainstream schools, with the addition of some extra-curricular activities. Other pathways include a more primary-based curriculum that is designed to support and nurture pupils and deliver an academic curriculum closely matched to their needs.

Despite the complexity of the school, the curriculum is sequenced and nearly all curriculum areas meet the needs of pupils well. However, some aspects of the mathematics curriculum are less well thought through. Although the mathematics curriculum is based on a commercial scheme, work planned for stronger mathematicians is not as well planned and sequenced as that for pupils who receive a more nurturing curriculum. Leaders recognise more work is needed to improve mathematics teaching for the small number of pupils who are working close to age-related expectations.

English is well planned and delivered across the school. Phonics is delivered to all pupils with a reading age below nine years. This has increased the number of pupils who are confident readers.

The art coordinator is new to post but has already made a strong impact on pupils' achievement. Many say they enjoy art because it enables them to express their feelings. The innovative and sensitive approach to the needs of pupils were clearly reflected in the help and support provided for a pupil who asked to make a plaque to mark the recent death of a relative.

Pupils who attend the school do so because of their social, emotional and mental health needs. For many, the intensive support they receive in school enables them to learn how to manage their behaviour and make a successful return to their mainstream school at the end of their 12-week placement period.

For others, often those who have been permanently excluded from school, it can take longer for their behaviour to improve. However, within the nurturing environment of the school, they start to feel valued and they begin to understand how to manage their behaviour.

The use of abusive, or 'industrial' language as it is called in school, is not tolerated. Pupils understand this. As they settle into school, the majority quickly reduce their use of unacceptable language. Overall, on most days the school is calm and purposeful and quality learning takes place.

The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of different activities designed to broaden pupils' vision and understanding of the world. These include visits to a sculpture park, the Royal Armouries, mountain bike training, parkour training and kayaking. Visits to places of religious worship are also undertaken. These help pupils to develop a deeper spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

School leaders, governors, trustees and the multi academy trust leadership have a strong understanding of the needs of the pupils who attend school. Trust leaders visit the school regularly. This enables them to both support and hold school leaders to account from a place of knowledge and understanding.

Staff hold leaders in high regard. Staff told inspectors that leaders were very supportive and always 'checked in on them' if they had been involved in an incident. Staff also appreciate the regular one-to-one meetings they have with their team leader.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding practice within the school is exceptional. Leaders, in partnership with the local authority and the police, have recognised and identified that many of the pupils live in areas afflicted by a rise in gang culture. The impact on pupils and their families is real and is very concerning. School leaders know the circumstances and needs of the pupils who attend the school. This helps them to carefully manage the mix of pupils when external intelligence advises them that it would not be safe for pupils from different gangs to be educated together. When this happens, leaders relocate staff and vulnerable pupils to a different site or provide home education for some.

In discussion with the inspection team, the local authority acknowledged the safeguarding issues facing the school and praised the headteacher for her work in setting up links with other agencies. They also praised the school's vigilant work to ensure the safety of pupils who attend the school.

Safer recruitment checks are undertaken rigorously and are in line with requirements.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Planning for learning in mathematics is not consistent across the school. As a result, pupils do not always make the progress they should, particularly for stronger mathematicians. Leaders need to develop further the curriculum to ensure it is more carefully sequenced and focused on meeting the needs of all pupils.

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 predecessor school, Westfields Pupil Referral Unit to be good in May 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	145434
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	10255780
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Not applicable
Number of pupils on the school roll	33
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	0
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jayne Foster
Headteacher	Hannah Lord
Website	www.reachacademy.uk.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined Ethos Academy Trust in September 2018.
- The school is an alternative provision which caters for the needs of key stage 3 pupils who have been permanently excluded from the Kirklees local authority area. The school also offers 12-week placements to pupils from surrounding high schools who have behavioural issues.
- Over the last five years, the school has seen a change in the needs of pupils that attend. In particular, there has been a rise in the numbers of pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.
- The school does not have a religious character.

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.
- The inspection team met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, three assistant headteachers, the chief executive officer of the trust, the director of education, the chair of trustees and a member of the governing body. The lead inspector also spoke to two members of the local authority alternative provision leadership team remotely.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English and art. 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 also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subject areas.
- The inspection team spoke to the designated safeguarding lead for the school and checked records recorded on the safeguarding online platform used by the school. Inspectors spoke with pupils about how safe they felt in school and checked staff's knowledge of recent safeguarding training.

Inspection team

Marian Thomas, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

David Penny

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023