

# Inspection of The Halifax Academy

Gibbet Street, Halifax, West Yorkshire HX2 0BA

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Inspection dates: 14 and 15 June 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development	<b>Outstanding</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	<b>Good</b>

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Leaders are determined that pupils will receive an education that provides them with the qualifications and confidence to make a positive difference in their community and beyond. Pupils benefit greatly from curriculums and programmes put in place to meet these goals.

The school's 'character curriculum' supports pupils expertly to 'develop a voice to positively change their world'. Pupils are able to carefully construct persuasive arguments based on detailed knowledge and well-considered personal opinion. They benefit from a wide range of clubs and societies, including a British Sign Language club, that meet and extend the range of their talents and interests.

The standards that pupils have achieved in national examinations have not returned to the impressive levels prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, pupils in school learn well and are catching up on lost learning quickly. Those pupils with potential barriers to learning receive the support they need to learn effectively.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is calm and focused. Learning is very rarely disrupted. There is little bullying in school. When it does happen, pupils report it, and it is dealt with promptly and effectively. Pupils appreciate the education they are receiving and the doors it is helping to open for their future.

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

Pupils' personal development is of equal importance to leaders as pupils' academic success. Leaders have identified that some past pupils had previously achieved the necessary grades to move into post-16 education but were then not always successful as they might have been because they lacked self-confidence. As a result, leaders have transformed the personal development curriculum, with a particular focus on developing pupils' belief that they can use their knowledge and qualifications to make a difference to their community and beyond. The 'Voice' programme supports pupils to feel confident to share their views and persuasively argue their opinions with others. These changes have been very effective. Pupils speak with confidence about how the personal development programme has supported them to be successful in their studies and outside school. Leaders monitor the longer term impact of the personal development provision. Pupils are now increasingly successful in their post-16 education.

Curriculum leaders have identified what pupils need to know at each phase of their learning, from Reception to Year 11. The recent introduction of phase-readiness checks is supporting teachers to assess whether pupils have the necessary knowledge and understanding to do well in the next phase of their learning.

The special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) team works effectively with curriculum leaders to ensure that pupils' learning in the 'accelerator' SEND provision

matches what other pupils are learning. This supports pupils with SEND to be successful when they transition to mainstream lessons.

Teachers' assessment of gaps in pupils' learning following the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions indicated that many pupils in key stage 4 had very significant gaps in their knowledge. Leaders took a one-off decision to enter pupils early for a GCSE option and to use the time freed up to provide extra teaching in mathematics and English for pupils in Year 11. As a result, published progress measures in 2022 do not fully reflect the quality of education that pupils receive in school. Despite this decision, and the steps taken by leaders to try and address the gaps in pupils' knowledge that remained, some pupils did not achieve as highly as was hoped for in their end-of-year external examinations. There is still work to do to ensure that current pupils catch up on lost learning from the pandemic.

The proportion of pupils studying a language in key stage 4 is low. Leaders have introduced subject-specialist teaching into the primary phase. It is too early to see the impact of these changes on entries for GCSE language qualifications.

Leaders have created an early years curriculum that has experiences woven through it that help to deepen children's knowledge of the world. Routines for learning are well established, and children show self-control. Children enjoy 'chatter natter' sessions, where they spend time developing their conversational skills. As a result, children speak confidently, using taught vocabulary. Early years leaders evaluate provision accurately. They have identified that mathematics provision is an area for further development to ensure that children are ready for their transition to Year 1.

Reading is prioritised in school. Leaders have adopted a new phonics scheme to improve the teaching of reading. In a short space of time, this has become a strength of the school. Pupils enjoy learning to read. Pupils who need to catch up are quickly identified and have extra sessions during the day. For a small number of pupils at the earliest stages of reading, leaders recognise that more precise support is needed so that they catch up as quickly as possible.

Professional development for staff in all roles is exceptional. There is a carefully planned programme that supports all staff to be highly effective. Teams of staff are empowered and supported to make improvements in their areas of responsibility. For example, the attendance team identified that its methods of working with families before the pandemic were not as effective post-pandemic. Too many pupils were frequently absent from school. As a result of changes made, the proportion of pupils persistently absent from school has fallen significantly.

Leaders at all levels know the school well. They work very closely with the community and community representatives. Decisions made are always in the best interests of pupils.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that all staff in school are aware of the risks that pupils may face and the signs that indicate they may be at risk. When concerns are raised, the designated safeguarding lead takes appropriate steps to help keep pupils safe, including, where appropriate, working with outside agencies. Weekly meetings that include members of the safeguarding team, attendance team, pastoral team and SEND team ensure that pupils receive the support they need to keep safe, attend school and be successful.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Pupils' learning was significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Steps taken to identify and address the gaps in learning were not as successful as leaders had hoped. As a result, pupils who sat their GCSE examinations in 2022 still had gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Pupils did not achieve as highly as expected in external examinations. Leaders should ensure that important gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding that have arisen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions are identified and fully addressed.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	140326
<b>Local authority</b>	Calderdale
<b>Inspection number</b>	10241919
<b>Type of school</b>	All-through
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,443
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Mike Reddy
<b>Headteacher</b>	Matt Perry
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thehalifaxacademy.org">www.thehalifaxacademy.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	14 and 15 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of Impact Education Multi Academy Trust.
- At the time of the previous inspection, there were children in Reception and pupils in Years 1 to 3 and in Years 7 to 11. There are now pupils in all year groups.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is close to the national average.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider of education.

## 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, the special educational needs coordinator, leaders responsible for behaviour and attendance, curriculum leaders, leaders in charge of personal development and careers, and early years leaders.
- Inspectors met with representatives from the trust and the chair of the local governing body.
- Inspectors spoke with the school improvement partner, who works closely with the school.
- Inspectors looked in detail at the curriculum in art and design, history, mathematics and reading. The inspectors talked to leaders and teachers about their curriculum plans. The inspectors also talked to pupils about their learning and what they knew and remembered in these subjects. They also looked at pupils' work. Inspectors heard pupils read and talked to other pupils about their reading.
- Inspectors met with the curriculum leader for Spanish and visited some Spanish lessons. Inspectors visited a range of other lessons during the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke to teachers, teaching assistants and support staff over the course of the inspection and considered the responses to the staff survey.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils and spoke to others informally during the inspection. They reviewed responses to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and spoke to parents and carers at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors took account of a wide range of documentary information, including the school's policies, its self-evaluation, records of behaviour, documentation related to safeguarding, and records of visits undertaken by the school improvement partner.

## Inspection team

Steve Wren, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Lynette Edwards	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Carr	His Majesty's Inspector
Katie North	Ofsted Inspector
Lesley Sullivan	His Majesty's Inspector

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