

# Inspection of Axe Valley Academy

Chard Street, Axminster, Devon EX13 5EA

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Inspection dates: 19 to 20 September 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Robert Crocker. This school is part of Blackdown Education Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Lorraine Heath, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Max Graesser.

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

Community runs through the heart of Axe Valley Academy. Pupils enjoy welcoming visitors and sharing their experiences of the school. Relationships between staff and pupils are based on mutual respect. Pupils feel safe in school and appreciate the support that adults provide to them. Parents are supportive of the school. They say the school communicates with them well.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school site. Adults challenge behaviour that does not meet the school's expectation. Bullying does occur occasionally, but pupils will report it to adults. When pupils or parents raise concerns, they are confident the school will listen and act.

The school has high aspirations for all pupils. It has a clear vision for pupils to achieve well academically and to develop well personally. The school has redeveloped the curriculum significantly in recent years. As a result, pupils are better prepared for their future studies.

Pupils enjoy being part of a house. Pupils earn house points in lessons, as well as during competitions and school events. Anning, Chudleigh and Coram houses enter into good natured competition for house points. House captains act as role models for other pupils.

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

The curriculum is ambitious. It goes beyond the national curriculum in some areas. The school has identified what pupils should know and be able to do in each subject. Teachers implement the curriculum effectively across the school. This means that pupils are well prepared for their key stage 4 qualifications.

Staff know what to teach and in which order. However, they do not always check that pupils have understood and can remember the important content in each subject. This leads to some pupils having gaps in their knowledge that make understanding new concepts difficult.

The school identifies accurately those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff have a good understanding of these pupils' individual needs. However, teaching is not always adapted precisely enough to help them succeed. As a result, a few pupils with SEND do not learn the curriculum as well as they could.

Reading is valued. Pupils read a wide range of books for pleasure. The school supports the weakest readers to build confidence and accuracy. This support helps the majority of pupils catch up and keep up with their peers.

The trust and the school intend pupils to study a curriculum with a strong academic core. In recent years, they have remodelled what is taught in Years 7 to 9. More

pupils now continue to learn modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11. Consequently, the proportion of pupils choosing to study the English Baccalaureate suite of GCSE qualifications is increasing.

The school has had some success in raising the rate of pupils' attendance. However, it understands the need to continue to improve school attendance. It works with families and other organisations to support pupils to regularly attend school.

Pupils learn about relationships, sex and health in an age-appropriate way. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including looking after their mental and physical health. Pupils learn about fundamental British values as well as life skills, such as personal finance. Pupils receive careers information, advice and guidance, including the opportunity for work experience. Pupils value their personal, social and health education lessons as an opportunity to learn, question and debate. They are well prepared for adult life.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils take part in music and performances as well as attending trips and visits. The school encourages pupils to take on leadership responsibilities. Many pupils work towards recognised awards, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Pupils use the school council to discuss their views on school issues. Pupils feel listened to and included.

The school and the trust provide staff with a range of high-quality professional development opportunities. They are considerate of staff workload and well-being. Those newest to teaching are well supported. As a result, staff feel valued and are proud to work at the school.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- Assessment does not always accurately identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. This means that teachers sometimes do not deal with misconceptions before they teach new content. The school and the trust should develop assessment practices that show teachers precisely what pupils know and can do, so that pupils can establish a firm foundation for future learning.
- Teaching approaches are not adapted precisely enough to meet the needs of some pupils with SEND. This means that these pupils do not learn some elements of the curriculum as well as their peers. The school and the trust should ensure that the needs of pupils with SEND are met consistently and effectively.

## 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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	144392
<b>Local authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	10288224
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	688
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Max Graesser
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Lorraine Heath
<b>Headteacher</b>	Robert Crocker
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://axevalley.bep.ac">https://axevalley.bep.ac</a>
<b>Date(s) of previous inspection</b>	3 and 4 December 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Axe Valley Academy was formerly part of the Uffculme Academy Trust. The trust joined the Blackdown Education Partnership on 1 September 2023.
- The school use one registered alternative provider and four unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school 's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with school leaders at all levels. Inspectors also met staff, the chair of the local academy committee, trust executive leaders and the chair of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, and history. 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 a sample of work.
- Inspectors spoke with representatives of the pupil body, including pupils who have held leadership responsibilities.
- Inspectors viewed a range of school documentation, including minutes of the academy council, the school `s self-evaluation and development plans.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator and reviewed plans that support pupils with SEND.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record of recruitment checks; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, as well as responses to the staff survey and pupil survey.

### **Inspection team**

Sara Berry, lead inspector

His Majesty `s Inspector

Mike Foley

Ofsted Inspector

Helen Kerr

Ofsted Inspector

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