

Inspection of a good school: The Whitley AP Academy

Whitley Phoenix Centre, Moorbottom Road, Halifax, West Yorkshire HX2 9SR

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 March 2024

Outcome

The Whitley AP Academy continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Phillip Hannah. This school is part of Impact Education Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Michael Kay, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Phil Shire.

What is it like to attend this school?

The Whitley AP Academy teaches pupils to be respectful, responsible, resilient and reflective. The school has high expectations for pupils. Skilled staff support pupils to get back on track with learning. Pupils achieve well. They learn positive school routines to prepare them well for their next steps in education, training or employment.

Most pupils join the school after a permanent exclusion from another school. Other pupils join the school if they need time away from mainstream schooling. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Some pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Others are assessed for an EHC plan while they attend this school. The school is supportive of pupils' individual needs.

Leaders ensure that pupils experience a curriculum packed with academic, vocational and personal development learning opportunities. All pupils receive daily support to improve their reading. Pupils learn to develop their social skills. If they need help to manage their emotions, staff support them well with a kind and nurturing approach.

The school is split across two sites. Younger pupils learn in a dedicated provision in a neighbouring primary school. Older pupils learn in a larger, purpose-built provision. Both buildings are modern and engaging. Staff and pupils have positive relationships. This ensures that pupils are happy and feel well supported in school.

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

Pupils experience a well-thought-out curriculum. It meets aspects of the national curriculum. Older pupils learn classic texts, such as those written by Shakespeare. Their

lessons include poetry, and creative and extended writing. Phonics has been relaunched for younger pupils. They receive skilful support to develop their phonics knowledge. However, phonics support for older pupils who are late to develop their reading skills is not embedded. Most school staff have not been sufficiently trained to teach early reading. Reading is an important part of lessons and the school day. Each lesson starts with a five-minute reading activity.

The vocational curriculum ensures pupils learn practical skills through different projects during the academic year. This helps when pupils join the school mid-term. Pupils apply practical skills with increasing expertise. They learn how to manufacture physical items such as bird boxes, toolboxes and shelf units. The impact of the curriculum is evident in pupils' work. It shows clear progression with a mixture of adaptations to engage and support pupils. Pupils confidently describe what they have been learning. They receive targeted intervention if they fall behind or struggle. Pupils are well supported.

Pupils feel safe in school. They are listened to. Leaders have introduced a behaviour for learning policy that focuses on positives. Rewards are prominent throughout the school. Staff and pupils work together to learn 'the 4 Rs' of respect, responsibility, resilience and reflection. Pupils' behaviour is well managed. If pupils lose focus, staff are swift to support them. Staff have high expectations for pupils' conduct. This means classrooms are purposeful. Pupils' attendance at the school does not meet leaders' expectations. Despite a slow, but positive, path of improvement, pupils' attendance is stubbornly low.

Leaders have developed a wide curriculum offer. It includes lessons that enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning. Other well-developed areas of the curriculum include relationships education. Pupils receive frequent guidance for their next steps in education and careers. This ensures pupils are prepared for life after school. Pupils' wider development is strengthened with educational visits. Lessons have clear links with theoretical and practical learning. Pupils learn about public services and the risks they may face in the community. For example, pupils have visited a fire station to learn how the fire services help them if an accident occurs.

Teachers, including early career teachers, feel well supported by leaders. Leaders ensure staff receive appropriate time to fulfil their roles effectively. This includes time for assessment and professional development. Trustees and governors understand well the priorities for the school's further improvement. With the CEO, they hold a shared moral and strategic vision for SEND and inclusion, with this school at its centre.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Most staff have not been trained to address pupils' lack of early reading skills expertly. Pupils do not learn to read as quickly as they could. The school must ensure staff are upskilled to deliver the school's phonics programme confidently.
- Too many pupils do not attend school regularly. They do not make the academic progress of which they are capable. The school should continue to work with pupils and their families to overcome any barriers to regular attendance.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Calderdale PRU, to be good in December 2013.

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

Unique reference number	146204
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	10297452
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	77
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Phil Shire
CEO of the trust	Michael Kay
Headteacher	Phillip Hannah
Website	https://twapa.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Whitley AP Academy converted to become an academy school in August 2019. When its predecessor school, Calderdale PRU, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is one of eight schools in Impact Education Multi Academy Trust.
- The school caters for pupils who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools and for pupils who are at risk of permanent exclusion. Pupils join the school throughout the academic year.
- Pupils aged between seven and 11 years attend a dedicated provision based at Lee Mount Primary School in Halifax. This is for up to 16 pupils. There are 11 pupils who currently attend the provision.
- All pupils have SEND. Many have social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school does not use any alternative education providers.
- The school measures itself against the Gatsby benchmarks to ensure pupils receive high-quality careers advice.

- 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

- 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 met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator, curriculum leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met the CEO of Impact Education Multi Academy Trust. The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body and the chair of the board of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading and English, mathematics, and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; 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 puts pupils' interests first.
- The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans.
- Inspectors looked at a range of information regarding behaviour. They observed the behaviour of pupils in classrooms and at social times.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils, staff and parents. This included any free-text responses to Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors took account of the school's analysis of its own surveys of parents' and pupils' opinions.

Inspection team

David Mills, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tricia Stevens

Ofsted Inspector

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