

Inspection of Armthorpe Academy

Mere Lane, Armthorpe, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN3 2DA

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 April 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

The headteacher of this school is David Bisley. This school is part of Consilium Academies, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by Michael McCarthy, the chief executive officer, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Martin Fleetwood.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils do not achieve as well as they should at this school. This is reflected in the published outcomes that they achieve. Pupils experience a variable quality of education. Many pupils have gaps in their knowledge. The school recognises this and has begun to make changes. Pupils are beginning to benefit from the recent changes to the curriculum. For example, the curriculum now aligns with the trust model. However, more work is required to ensure that pupils benefit from a consistently high-quality education.

Many pupils meet the high expectations the school has for their behaviour. However, some do not. Pupils' learning is still too often disrupted by others. On the occasions bullying does occur, the school deals with it effectively.

Pupils who attend well achieve better in their examinations. However, for too many pupils, especially the most vulnerable, low attendance is a barrier to their achievement.

Recently, leaders have worked to strengthen the opportunities available to pupils to explore their talents and interests. Pupils enjoy the improved range of enrichment activities. These include darts club and languages club. Pupils are proud to represent the school in sporting fixtures. Many pupils, particularly those who are older, recognise their improved experience in school.

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

Over time, the school's expectations for what pupils can achieve have not been high enough. In the past, the curriculum that pupils experience has not prepared them well for their next steps. The school now recognises this and is making appropriate changes to improve the quality of education that pupils receive. The school now has high expectations of pupils. Current pupils access an ambitious curriculum. However, they do not revisit previous learning frequently enough. As a result, gaps in knowledge remain.

The school has made improvements to the education that pupils receive. Pupils are starting to make links in their knowledge and apply learning in different contexts. For example, pupils in science make links with mathematics when studying chemical reactions. The improved curriculum is benefiting pupils in younger year groups more swiftly. The school recognises the need to support older pupils who have gaps in their knowledge. The school's improved approach to understanding where pupils are in their learning is also benefiting younger pupils.

Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit from support in class. For example, all visual presentations are adapted to support pupils who have a visual impairment. Pupils who need more bespoke support benefit from the nurture provision. The broad curriculum these pupils receive is tailored to meet

their needs well. Pupils in the early stages of reading are identified quickly. The effective support from well-trained staff helps them to become more fluent readers.

The school's recent focus on raising expectations for behaviour is improving the experience of pupils in the school. Many pupils have responded positively to the increased expectations. There is further work to do to support pupils in reaching these expectations. Suspensions are still high. The school places a high priority on removing barriers to good attendance. This is starting to have an impact. However, the attendance of some of the most vulnerable pupils remains too low.

The personal development of pupils is a focus of the school. Pupils' wider experiences have been effectively reviewed and improved. Pupils recognise this positive change. Pupils' attendance at enrichment clubs is high. Pupils proudly participate in the Christmas concert and are looking forward to the summer school show. Pupils have respect for others. They learn about different protected characteristics. Individual differences are warmly accepted by pupils.

Planned opportunities to develop pupils' oracy skills are woven through the curriculum. Key stage 3 pupils take part in a national poetry competition. They enjoy the challenge of reciting a poem from memory. Some key stage 4 pupils enjoy taking part in a national competition to discuss human rights. They maturely talk about sensitive topics and demonstrate a respect for difference.

New leaders to the school, trust and those responsible for governance have high ambition for pupils. They are making the school a better place for pupils to attend. The many changes the school has made are starting to have a positive impact. Many staff, parents and pupils recognise this.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum does not support pupils' learning effectively over time. Too many pupils do not recall what they have been taught. The school should review its curriculum and ensure there are opportunities for pupils to know more, remember more and do more.
- The attendance of the most vulnerable pupils is not high enough. This means that they do not benefit from the improving quality of education provided by the school. Leaders should continue their work to improve the attendance of these pupils.
- The significant recent changes made at the school are not yet embedded. This means that pupils still have variance in their experience at school. The school and trust must continue their work to evaluate, modify and embed improvements.

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	138314
Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	10320276
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	649
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Martin Fleetwood
Headteacher	David Bisley
Website	www.armthorpeacademy.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 January 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school in September 2023. The chief executive officer joined the school in December 2023.
- The school is part of Consilium Academies trust.
- The school uses eight alternative provisions, one of which is unregistered.
- 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, modern foreign languages, physical education and science. 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.
- Inspectors met with the leaders of geography.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work in art, English and History.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer, deputy chief executive officer and chair of the trust.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- Inspectors contacted alternative provisions.
- 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.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents through the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils and staff through meetings held with them across the two days of the inspection.
- An inspector reviewed the pupil premium strategy.

Inspection team

Andrew Gibbins, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Pritiben Patel	Ofsted Inspector
Vicky Callaghan	Ofsted Inspector
Joe Barton	Ofsted Inspector

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