

Inspection of a good school: Bluecoat Aspley Academy

Aspley Lane, Aspley, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG8 5GY

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 June 2024

Outcome

Bluecoat Aspley Academy continues to be a good school.

The principal of this school is Catherine Rowell. This school is part of Archway Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Sian Hampton, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Malcolm Trobe.

What is it like to attend this school?

Bluecoat Aspley Academy is a caring and inclusive school. Pupils come from a diverse range of backgrounds. The school ensures that all pupils feel included. For example, the school has a culture day every year when pupils and staff celebrate the different cultures they come from.

The school has high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Most pupils meet these expectations. Most pupils behave well and have good attitudes to learning. They said that sometimes lessons get disrupted by off-task behaviour. Most pupils think that teachers are fair when dealing with any issues. Pupils feel safe in school. They said that although bullying happens sometimes, the school deals with any issues. However, some pupils said that sometimes pupils are not respectful to each other and this is not always addressed.

The school provides many opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities that many pupils attend. For example, pupils enjoy participating in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, chess club, cheerleading, Japanese club and taekwondo. Pupils are also proud to take on student leadership roles linked to the school's values of hope, family, respect and faith.

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

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), have access to a broad curriculum, including the full range of the English Baccalaureate subjects at key stage 4. More pupils are now choosing to study a modern foreign language at key stage 4.

The school has ensured that a well-sequenced and ambitious curriculum is in place for all subjects. It is clear what pupils will learn and when, so pupils build on what they have previously learned. The school has also ensured that the resources used to deliver the curriculum are precisely matched to the intended learning. As a result, most teachers deliver the curriculum effectively, and pupils achieve well.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use assessment well to identify and address any gaps in learning. Most teachers use the school's agreed approach to teaching the curriculum well. They explain information clearly and question pupils effectively to check their understanding. However, some teachers do not always do this consistently well. When this occurs, some pupils do not learn as well as they could.

The school prioritises reading. Pupils in key stage 3 have regular library lessons that support them in developing a love of reading. Pupils also enjoy reading in form time. The school uses assessment well to identify pupils who need extra help with their reading. These pupils get regular support, which helps them improve their reading skills.

Teachers ensure that pupils with SEND are well supported. They adapt their teaching and resources so that these pupils can access the curriculum. Pupils with more complex needs benefit from a bespoke curriculum. Staff provide effective support for these pupils. They make good progress from their starting points.

Students in the sixth form have access to a range of academic and vocational courses. Teachers in the sixth form use their strong subject knowledge to deliver the curriculum well. Students benefit from a wide range of extra opportunities. They get highly effective careers advice and guidance. They are well-prepared for their next steps.

The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour. A clear behaviour system is in place that pupils understand. Most staff use this well to address any conduct issues. The school has recently introduced a 'behaviour curriculum' to teach pupils to be kind, safe and responsible. However, a minority of pupils do not always meet these expectations. Sometimes, they call other pupils unkind names and do not behave sensibly when moving around the school. When this occurs some pupils do not always enjoy school.

Pupils understand the importance of regular attendance. The school effectively supports pupils who need help to improve their attendance. As a result, pupils attend school well.

The school has planned well for pupils' broader development. Pupils understand the importance of fundamental British values and treating others with respect. They know how to keep themselves safe online and when in the community. Pupils benefit from a comprehensive careers programme. They are well-prepared for life in modern Britain.

Staff are proud to work at the school and feel well supported. The school provides well-thought-out professional development opportunities that support staff in developing their practice. The trust has a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Trust leaders provide effective support. Those responsible for governance know the school well and fulfil their statutory duties effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not always use the school's agreed approach to delivering the curriculum well. They do not always explain information clearly or use questioning well. This means that some pupils do not always learn as well as they could. The school should ensure that all teachers use the school's agreed approach to delivering the curriculum effectively.
- A minority of pupils are not always kind or respectful to other pupils. For example, they sometimes call other pupils unkind names and do not behave sensibly when moving around the school. When this occurs, some pupils do not always enjoy school. The school should ensure that all pupils understand the school's expectations for treating others and how to behave at unstructured times.

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 school to be good in May 2018.

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	137798
Local authority	Nottingham
Inspection number	10298475
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1375
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	441
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Malcolm Trobe
CEO of trust	Sian Hampton
Principal	Catherine Rowell
Website	www.bluecoataspley.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	9 and 10 May 2018

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Archway Learning Trust.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers.
- The sixth form is located at Maid Marian Way, Nottingham NG1 6AB. This is a temporary arrangement, and the sixth form will return to the main site in the next academic year.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Southwell. Its last section 48 inspection took place in May 2016. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place before the end of the academic year.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. At the time of the inspection 6 pupils were attending this provision.

- 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

- 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.
- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 spoke with the principal, vice principals and the assistant principals.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, geography, art and modern foreign languages. 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 also discussed the curriculum and visited lessons in some other subjects.
- Inspectors visited registration sessions and collective worship.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from a range of year groups, including pupils with SEND. Inspectors spoke with pupils at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaire.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the trust, other trustees and the chair of the academy advisory board.
- The lead inspector met with the CEO of the trust and other trust leaders.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at break and lunchtimes.

Inspection team

Paul Halcro, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Julie McBrearty	Ofsted Inspector
Mel Wicks	Ofsted Inspector

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