

# Inspection of Blackpool Aspire Academy

Blackpool Old Road, Blackpool, Lancashire FY3 7LS

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Inspection dates: 5 and 6 June 2024

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Good

The headteacher of this school is John Woods. This school is part of the Fylde Coast 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), Dean Logan, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Mark Gutteridge.

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

Pupils are at the centre of every decision that the school makes. They develop warm and caring relationships with staff, who want pupils to have the best start in life. This helps most pupils to feel happy in school.

The school has raised its expectations of pupils' behaviour. Well-established routines help to ensure that the school is calm and orderly. For example, each morning, pupils line up to listen to a welcome from a senior member of staff. This helps to get pupils ready for the day ahead. Most pupils conduct themselves sensibly and respectfully around the building.

Pupils welcome opportunities to take on responsibilities. For instance, some train as well-being warriors or anti-bullying ambassadors to support their peers. Members of the junior leadership team described the pride that they feel when their ideas are put into action.

The trust has supported the school to prioritise improving the curriculum so that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), can achieve well. However, weaknesses in the previous curriculum, together with pupils' low rates of attendance and the lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, mean that some pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

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

The school and the trust are steadfast in their determination to address social disadvantage through education. They have identified suitable actions to enable them to realise this ambition. They have made headway in a number of areas. For example, the curriculum offer is stronger and pupils' behaviour is improving. However, this work is ongoing and, as such, has not had enough impact on those pupils currently at the school.

The previous curriculum did not enable pupils to achieve well. This is reflected in the end of Year 11 results in the 2023 published data. Pupils' attainment across a number of subjects was significantly below the national average. These pupils were not well prepared for the next stage of their education or employment.

The school has made positive changes to the curriculum. It is broad, ambitious and well organised. In some subjects, the essential information that pupils should learn is identified and carefully ordered. However, this is not the case in some other subjects. This makes it difficult for staff in these subjects to design learning activities that emphasise the most important knowledge that pupils should remember. This contributes to pupils' uneven achievement across different subjects.

The school has recently introduced assessment strategies which enable teachers to carefully check how well pupils remember their learning over time. However, some teachers do not use these as effectively as they should. This hampers their

understanding of what pupils know. As a result, some pupils develop gaps in their knowledge which are not addressed swiftly.

The school has appropriate processes in place to identify the needs of pupils with SEND. It provides staff with useful information about those needs. Staff use this information successfully to ensure that pupils with SEND can access the curriculum. However, these pupils are subject to the same weaknesses in the curriculum as their peers. As a result, they typically do not achieve as well as they should.

The school recognises that reading is a barrier to learning for some pupils. It ensures that pupils have opportunities to engage with high-quality texts in daily 'literary canon' sessions. Those pupils who struggle the most with reading receive support from expert staff to help them to catch up with their peers.

The school prioritises careers education. Beginning in Year 7, pupils benefit from a wealth of information and guidance. This helps them to make informed choices about their next steps. Year 10 pupils spoke enthusiastically about the learning and opportunities that they gained from their recent work experience.

The school promotes pupils' personal development very well. This ensures that pupils are ready for life in modern Britain. For example, they learn about the importance of embracing diversity. This learning is woven through all aspects of school life, including the curriculum.

The school has recently changed its approach to dealing with unacceptable conduct. Behaviour has improved as a result. Pupils are attentive to their teachers. Typically, lessons proceed free from disruption. The school's 'hive' programme offers thoughtful support to a small number of pupils who struggle to conduct themselves well. This is helping these pupils to regulate their own behaviour.

The school has a strong emphasis on improving pupils' attendance. Despite this focus, some pupils, including the most vulnerable, do not attend school as often as they should.

The trust and members of the local governing body provide suitable support and challenge to ensure that the school continues to improve. Staff value the support that they receive from the trust. Although much is being done to improve the curriculum, most staff said that the school has acted to limit the impact on their workload.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- In some subjects, the school has not clarified the important knowledge that pupils should remember over time. This hinders teachers from designing learning that builds securely on what pupils already know. The school should ensure that teachers are clear about the knowledge that pupils require in readiness for subsequent learning.
- In some subjects, teachers do not use assessment strategies effectively to check how well pupils have remembered their learning in the long term. This means that gaps in pupils' knowledge are sometimes not addressed swiftly. The school should support teachers to use assessment strategies effectively to identify and remedy gaps in pupils' learning, so that pupils embed their knowledge securely over time.
- Some pupils, particularly some disadvantaged pupils, do not attend school as often as they should. This means that they miss out on essential learning and they do not fully experience all that the school has to offer. The school should take effective action to improve the attendance of these pupils.

## 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>	141132
<b>Local authority</b>	Blackpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	10294379
<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>	842
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Mark Gutteridge
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Dean Logan
<b>Headteacher</b>	John Woods
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.blackpoolaspireacademy.co.uk">www.blackpoolaspireacademy.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	13 and 14 November 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the Fylde Coast Academy Trust.
- The school uses five registered and three unregistered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.
- 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, English, geography, modern foreign languages, physical education and design and technology. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector also spoke with leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other leaders and staff.
- An inspector spoke with representatives of the trust, including the chair of trustees.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the local governing body, including the chair of governors.
- An inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- The inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation documents and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- 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.

## Inspection team

Sally Rix, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Chris Beard	Ofsted Inspector
Alan Hammersley	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Mitchell	Ofsted Inspector
Lindy Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector

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