

Inspection of Airedale Academy

Crewe Road, Airedale, Castleford, West Yorkshire WF10 3JU

Inspection dates: 30 and 31 January 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

The interim principal of this school is Dan Neal. This school is part of Northern Ambition Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Elizabeth Fairhurst, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Robert Hall.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school has introduced new approaches to improve the quality of education. Pupils study a broad range of subjects. However, curriculum planning and teaching do not consistently support all pupils to remember and apply knowledge securely over time. As a result, many pupils, including some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not achieve as well as they could at GCSE level.

Most pupils behave well. However, a minority of pupils do not behave as well as they should. They disrupt the learning of others and truant from lessons. Pupils and staff told us about changes to the behaviour system. However, not all staff are consistent in its use. Pupils experience derogatory and discriminatory language from other pupils.

The sixth form is small but valued by the students. They have limited options of courses to study. There is variability in the quality of the teaching of these lessons. Some students in the sixth form hear the same derogatory language that pupils in the lower years encounter.

Pupils across the school benefit from well-planned visits to extend their experience of the wider world. The school provides a wide range of enrichment activities that many pupils enjoy. However, pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain is limited by the quality of the education they receive in lessons.

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

The quality of education that the school provides is not consistent across and within subjects. The school has taken action to develop the curriculum. In some subjects, the most important knowledge that pupils need to learn is mapped out in clear and logical ways. This is not the case in all subjects.

The curriculum is not taught consistently well across all subjects. The school's use of assessment does not identify pupils' deep understanding of significant concepts well enough. This means that gaps in pupils' understanding are left unmet.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access the same curriculum as their peers. However, they receive variable levels of support. The school has prioritised the support for pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans. Support for pupils with SEND who do not have an EHC plan is less secure.

The school has developed routines to promote a positive learning environment for all pupils. However, staff do not apply these routines consistently. Pupils and staff told inspectors that too many lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour. When pupils do not behave well, staff do not support them effectively to help correct their behaviour. Too many pupils are removed from lessons or suspended from school. Often, when pupils return to lessons, they continue to disrupt learning. Some pupils do not enjoy their time at school because of the poor behaviour of others.

Pupils receive a well-structured programme of personal development. This includes healthy and unhealthy relationships, how to stay safe, fundamental British values and sex and relationships education. Pupils are enthusiastic about activities such as 'Airedale on Tour'. However, the teaching of personal, social and health education is inconsistent. This means that some pupils do not develop a secure understanding of these important topics.

The sixth form allows students to continue their studies at Airedale Academy. The school offers three vocational courses, which are suited to the students' needs. All students complete a further award from a local university. In addition, the school expects students to volunteer in the local community and support the school. For example, some students act as reading partners for younger pupils. The students are taught appropriate information for their age, such as learning about finance. However, too many students do not attend regularly and miss important learning opportunities.

Most staff are proud to work at the school. They believe that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being. Trustees and trust leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They work in partnership to challenge and support leaders effectively. Trust leaders and trustees are committed to helping the school improve further.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's use of assessment does not accurately check pupils' knowledge and how well pupils have understood important concepts. As a result, some pupils move on to new learning before they are ready, or there are gaps in their learning that impact on their progress. The school should ensure that assessment tasks enable teachers to gain a secure picture of pupils' knowledge and understanding and adapt their teaching accordingly.
- New behavioural systems and expectations are not fully embedded and enacted across the school. Some pupils do not behave well and disrupt the learning of others. The school should ensure that new systems and expectations are consistently applied and that all pupils are supported to manage their behaviour appropriately.
- The curriculum to support pupils' personal development provides limited opportunities for pupils to revisit and recall important content. Pupils' understanding of the fundamental British values is not secure. Some pupils do not show respect for the protected characteristics. The school should take further action to enhance this aspect of the curriculum.

- A number of strategies to improve the school have been implemented recently. It is too early to see the impact of some of these strategies. The school should consistently monitor and evaluate the impact of recent school improvement strategies to ensure that leaders are aware of emerging trends that need further action

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	136613
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10297352
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,055
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	43
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Robert Hall
Interim Principal	Dan Neal
Website	www.airedaleacademy.com
Dates of previous inspection	29 and 30 November 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Northern Ambition Academies Trust.
- The school uses nine providers of alternative provision, of which four are 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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued 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: English, geography, mathematics and physical education. 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, 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 met with the chief executive officer of the Trust, the Interim Principal, and other senior leaders over the course of the inspection.
- The lead inspector met with the members of the Academy Council and the Chair of Trustees.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents through the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils through their responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils and through meetings held with pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff through meetings and through their responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.

Inspection team

Chris Fletcher, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Vicky Callaghan	Ofsted Inspector
Adam Ryder	Ofsted Inspector
Gill Senior	Ofsted Inspector

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