

Inspection of a good school: Acklam Grange School

Lodore Grove, Middlesbrough TS5 8PB

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 October 2022

Outcome

Acklam Grange School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Difference is celebrated in this diverse school. There is genuine mutual respect between pupils and staff. Leaders go the extra mile to ensure that pupils are cared for, nurtured and developed. Pupils, parents and carers, and staff hold the school in high esteem. They are right to do so.

Leaders set high standards for pupils. There is an unwavering belief among staff that all pupils can make a success of their time in school, regardless of their background. Pupils step up to this challenge. They are developed academically and supported to become well-rounded individuals. Pupils leave the school well prepared for life in modern Britain.

There is exceptional pastoral care available to pupils. Pupils trust adults and feel safe. Bullying is rare and not tolerated. The behaviour of pupils is impressive. Pupils with leadership responsibilities are a shining example to others.

Pupils' personal development is high on leaders' agenda. There is a wealth of extra-curricular clubs for pupils to access. Pupils make good use of these. Leaders understand the barriers that might stop some pupils from accessing after-school clubs. They work to address these. The most disadvantaged pupils consistently benefit from the wider opportunities provided by the school.

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

There are many strengths to Acklam Grange School. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is broad, ambitious and well considered. The qualifications that pupils can study in Years 10 and 11 are relevant to the job opportunities that are available in the local area. Individual subject curriculums are well designed. Subject leaders have ensured that new content builds on prior knowledge. Many aspects of the curriculum develop pupils' cultural capital effectively. For example, pupils studying economics also learn about the views of important economists, such as John Maynard Keynes. However, leaders have not fully assured themselves that all subjects expose pupils to the very best that has been

thought and said. Leaders are developing the curriculum so that pupils can make stronger links between their knowledge from different subjects.

Leaders provide staff with effective training and support. As a result, the curriculum is well taught. Teachers present information clearly for pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit from personalised support and skilfully adapted teaching. Pupils accessing the specially resourced provision are particularly well catered for. This helps pupils with SEND to learn the same curriculum as their peers.

Leaders and teachers use assessment thoughtfully. Teachers check pupils' knowledge in lessons. Staff spot and address pupils' misconceptions as these arise. Teachers identify which pupils need additional help and provide them with extra support. Leaders use assessment information intelligently to further refine the curriculum.

Leaders rightly prioritise reading. There is effective work to develop a love of reading among pupils. Those who need extra help with reading get the support that they need.

Pupils behave very well. Incidents of poor behaviour are infrequent. Pupils who receive a suspension from school rarely repeat the same inappropriate behaviour. This is because leaders take effective action when pupils make mistakes. This helps pupils to avoid repeated sanctions.

The work to support pupils' wider development is particularly impressive. The 'AGS Pride' programme is of a very high quality. It supports pupils to develop as active citizens. Leaders ensure that the diverse school community is celebrated. As one pupil put it, 'The school allows us to embrace our culture.'

Leaders engage well with parents, pupils and staff. Leaders' open-door policy is appreciated. Governors, trustees and leaders place great emphasis on looking after staff. For example, staff can access the school's counselling services as required. Safeguarding leaders have professional supervision to support them with their well-being. Overwhelmingly, staff feel that leaders take account of their workload when making decisions that affect them.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Systems to safeguard pupils are robust. Leaders have established a culture of vigilance. Staff know to pass on any concern, no matter how minor they think it might be. This allows safeguarding leaders to build a clear picture around pupils who may be at risk of harm. Leaders engage extensively with external services. Leaders have expanded the available in-school support to help pupils who might not be eligible to receive support from external agencies.

The AGS Pride programme educates pupils about important safeguarding issues. For example, the school's 'It's not ok' strategy has taught pupils that intolerance, bullying and using sexualised language are not acceptable.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Although individual subject curriculums are typically well designed, leaders have not ensured that the curriculum fully supports pupils to make links between their learning in different subjects. Planning for the development of pupils' cultural capital is not consistently strong in all subject areas. Leaders should continue their work to further enhance the curriculum so that it fully develops pupils' cultural capital and supports them to make connections in their learning between different subjects.

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 predecessor school, Acklam Grange School, to be good in February 2016.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	145774
Local authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	10241364
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	1,454
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Haroon Ul Rashid
Headteacher	Michael Laidler
Website	www.acklamgrange.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Acklam Grange School converted to become an academy school in July 2018. When its predecessor school, also called Acklam Grange School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND. This is accessed by 12 pupils with communication and interaction needs.
- A very small number of pupils attend one of four registered alternative providers used by the school.
- The school has an off-site unit called 'Resolution', which is attended by a very small number of pupils in Years 10 and 11.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior and middle leaders. The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of the trust.

- The lead inspector held a meeting with two members of the board of trustees, including the chair. The lead inspector also met with some governors who form the school's local council, including the chair of the local council.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, science and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also met with the faculty leaders for computing and business, physical education and art.
- Inspectors spoke to the reader leader and visited tutor groups undertaking reading activities. An inspector also visited some support sessions taking place in the school's specially resourced provision and spoke to pupils who access the provision.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and a deputy DSL to discuss the arrangements for safeguarding. This included reviewing the school's single central record and a range of safeguarding logs. Throughout the inspection, inspectors spoke with teachers, non-teaching staff and pupils about their safeguarding knowledge.
- Inspectors met with other leaders, such as those responsible for pupils' wider personal development and careers. An inspector also met with some early career teachers, along with their mentors.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils, formally and informally, throughout the inspection. This included pupils with leadership responsibilities in school, as well as some pupils who had received more than one suspension from school. Inspectors also observed break- and lunchtime arrangements.
- An inspector spoke on the telephone to representatives from two of the registered alternative providers used by the school.
- Inspectors considered a range of school documentation. This included external evaluations of the school, the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan and minutes of meetings of the board of trustees and local council.
- The views of parents, staff and pupils received through Ofsted's surveys were also considered, as well as emails from parents that were sent to the school during the inspection.

Inspection team

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