

Inspection of Highfield Leadership Academy

Highfield Road, Blackpool, Lancashire FY4 3JZ

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 July 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders are transforming this school for pupils. Pupils are proud of their school. The pupils that inspectors spoke with said that the best thing about Highfield Leadership Academy is the sense of belonging that they feel. Bullying of any kind is rare. Pupils are confident that if bullying does occur, staff will deal with it quickly and effectively.

This is a caring school where pupils feel happy and safe. Pupils show respectful attitudes towards each other and to their teachers. During social times, pupils are friendly. They socialise well together. Pupils cherish the support that they get from staff, including for their mental health and well-being.

Pupils value diversity. They spoke highly of the opportunities that they get through the personal development curriculum to explore the differences that they will encounter in British society. Pupils appreciate the range of activities that build character and resilience, for example being part of the cadets.

Teachers have high expectations of all pupils at this school. Most pupils show positive attitudes towards their learning. In lessons, they behave well. However, pupils have not experienced a suitably rich and ambitious curriculum at key stage 3.

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

Leaders are aspirational for all pupils at this school. At key stage 4, almost all pupils follow the suite of subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate. To reflect their high aspirations, leaders are in the process of increasing the breadth and ambition of the curriculum at key stage 3. This is to ensure that pupils can learn deeply across all of their subjects and so that they are well prepared for the demands of key stage 4.

The new curriculum for Year 9 is under construction. Subject leaders are beginning to think carefully about the essential knowledge that they want pupils to know and remember in key stage 3. However, in many subjects, curriculum plans are incomplete. They do not define the key knowledge that leaders intend pupils to learn or the order in which they should learn it. In some subjects, teachers do not know the most effective way to deliver the key stage 3 curriculum.

Leaders have introduced a range of approaches to enable teachers to check whether pupils know more and remember more of what they are taught. In some subjects, teachers are not using these strategies as effectively as they should to help pupils to embed their knowledge. Some teachers are not clear about the misconceptions that pupils may have.

Leaders have implemented successful strategies to support pupils in key stage 3 who are behind with their reading. This is helping these pupils to catch up quickly. However, some older pupils have received the same effective support. This means

that some pupils at key stage 4 have weaknesses in their reading knowledge. This hinders their progress through the curriculum.

Leaders have strengthened the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is increasingly providing teachers with the information that they need to make successful curriculum adaptations for pupils with SEND. That said, some teachers are not equipped to use this information well enough. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not progress through the curriculum as well as they should.

Pupils treat each other well. They are confident in teachers' expertise to manage behaviour. This means that pupils can concentrate in their lessons without learning being disrupted. Added to this, pupils attend school regularly. Leaders have worked tirelessly to improve the attendance of all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with SEND.

Pupils perceive personal, social, health and economic education lessons to be a strength of the school. For example, they learn about how to have healthy relationships. Although Year 11 pupils are no longer attending school, leaders have continued to provide careers information, advice and guidance. Leaders continue to provide remote support for Year 11 pupils' well-being.

Trustees and leaders have been, and continue to be, incredibly proactive in improving the quality of education for all pupils. Most staff are positive about what leaders do to listen and respond to the pressures that they face.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is a considerable strength of the school. Leaders have ensured that staff receive pertinent and up-to-date information regarding the risks that pupils may face. All staff are conversant with the procedures for keeping pupils safe. Staff appreciate how visible and approachable members of the safeguarding team are.

Leaders have ensured that all staff have received extensive training to enable them to confidently educate pupils about risks such as sexual abuse. Form tutors play an active role in promoting safeguarding on a daily basis. Pupils understand how to stay safe online and in the community.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is under development in key stage 3. As such, subject leaders are in the process of deciding and defining exactly what will be taught in each subject. Consequently, pupils do not currently experience a broad and rich key stage 3 curriculum. Leaders should finalise, roll out and embed their new

curriculum. They should ensure that teachers have the knowledge and understanding of how to implement their new curriculum plans.

- The systems to assess how well pupils have learned the key knowledge that they need are not consistently in place across all subjects. This means that subject leaders and teachers do not have the most pertinent information to address pupils' misconceptions. Leaders should refine and embed their approaches to assessment. This is so that teachers check that pupils have learned the core knowledge and concepts in each subject area.
- In some subjects, teachers do not adapt the curriculum as effectively as they should for pupils with SEND. This hinders some pupils' progress through the curriculum. Leaders should provide additional training to staff to ensure that they know how to adapt subject curriculums effectively to meet the learning needs of pupils with SEND. This is particularly important as leaders roll out their new curriculum plans.
- Older pupils have gaps in their reading knowledge. As a result, they do not access the curriculum as well as they should. Leaders should build on the successful strategies that are in place in Years 7 and 8 to support weaker readers and put these into place for pupils in key stage 4.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school [here](#).

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	142469
Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	10184635
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	630
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Paul Fearnley
Principal	Andrew Galbraith
Website	highfieldleadershipacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	16 March 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last full inspection, a new principal has been appointed.
- The school uses alternative provision for a small number of pupils at Educational Diversity and The Alternative School.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) 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 principal, the senior leadership team, middle leaders and a range of teaching and support staff. An inspector spoke with a representative

from the multi-academy trust, two parent governors and the school improvement partner.

- As part of this inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, history and French. Inspectors met with subject leaders, visited some lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils and teachers.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from Year 7 to Year 10. Inspectors also observed breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding procedures and the checks made on staff. Inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding in school. An inspector also checked the arrangements for pupils attending alternative provision.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, the school development plans, self-evaluation documents, curriculum plans and behaviour and attendance records.
- At the time of this inspection, Year 11 pupils were no longer attending school.
- Inspectors considered the 59 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff. Inspectors also checked the views of the 38 parents in their responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. This included the 33 comments received via the free-text facility.

Inspection team

Rachel Goodwin, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Claire Hollister	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Ruddy	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Pennington	Her Majesty's Inspector

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