

Inspection of Great Academy Ashton

Broad oak Road, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire OL6 8RF

Inspection dates:	11 and 12 March 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The principal of this school is David Waugh. This school is part of The Great Academies Education 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), Brendan Loughran, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Paul Jones.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a welcoming school. Pupils build positive, trusting relationships with each other and staff.

Pupils feel safe and happy. They are confident that when things go wrong, staff are there to help, including with any occasional bullying issues. Pupils speak highly of the support that they receive from pastoral staff.

The school is a well-organised, calm environment. Pupils receive a positive start to the day during 'morning mood' registration. They typically behave well in lessons and around the school during unstructured times.

The school is increasingly ambitious for all pupils. The curriculum provides an extensive range of subjects for pupils to learn. However, the design and delivery of the curriculum does not help some pupils to achieve as well as they should.

Pupils learn to keep themselves safe and to be aware of the world around them. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their interests and talents. The high-quality school band being a prime example. There is a wide variety of extra-curricular activities, including sports, drama and catch-up clubs.

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

The school has made sure that, in the vast majority of subjects, the curriculum is well constructed and ambitious for all pupils. In those subjects, the key knowledge and vocabulary that pupils learn is clearly identified. This supports their progress through the curriculum. However, where the essential knowledge that pupils should gain is less well defined, some pupils are not taught important knowledge and skills.

In many subjects, the curriculum is taught effectively. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. Most use effective strategies that typically help pupils to learn and remember the curriculum. However, some teachers do not use these methods effectively. They do not adapt their teaching to recap on forgotten knowledge or consolidate prior learning. This means that pupils' learning is not as secure as it should be in readiness for them to move onto new subject content.

Teachers typically check that pupils have understood what has been taught. When this happens, pupils are secure in what they know, and they progress well through the curriculum. However, sometimes, checks do not happen as a matter of routine. As a result, some misconceptions are not identified or addressed. This hinders some pupils from achieving as well as they should.

The school has put in place an ambitious reading strategy. This includes a new library and carefully chosen books to develop pupils' enjoyment of reading. Each afternoon, pupils read together, focusing on the word of the day and the week to develop their vocabulary.

The school quickly identifies, and supports, those pupils who need help to improve their reading.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. The school carefully identifies pupils' needs and shares this information with teachers. Most teachers use this guidance to support pupils effectively during lessons.

The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes. There are effective systems in place to manage poor behaviour and low-level disruption in lessons. Pupils have responded well to these expectations. The school effectively prioritises improving pupils' attendance.

There is a well-thought-out programme to support pupils' personal development. Pupils learn about healthy relationships, how to keep themselves safe from harm and to be understanding of the differences between people. Pupils understand fundamental British values, different cultures and religions. This helps them prepare for life in modern Britain. Pupils receive a strong offer of careers advice and guidance.

The trust and members of the local governing committee work together to provide the school with appropriate support and challenge. The school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. It is working productively to further improve the quality of education that pupils receive.

Staff morale is high. There is a strong team ethos where everyone feels valued. Staff appreciate the consideration that the school has for their well-being and workload.

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 use the agreed methods and approaches to help pupils recall and consolidate their learning. This means that some pupils do not have secure prior knowledge that helps them when new learning is introduced. The school should ensure that all teachers use the agreed teaching methods effectively so that pupils can achieve well.
- Some teachers do not check what pupils know and understand well enough. This means that misconceptions are not identified and addressed, which limits some pupils' learning. The school should ensure that teachers use assessment strategies effectively to help pupils progress well through the curriculum.

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	135508
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	10377992
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1291
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Jones
CEO of the trust	Brendan Loughran
Principal	David Waugh
Website	www.gaa.greatacademies.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 November 2024, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses seven registered alternative provisions and three unregistered alternative provisions.
- 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. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 met with the principal, members of the senior leadership team and a range of staff. They also met with the chair of the trust, chair of the local governing committee and the trust executive team.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, science, design and technology and music. 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 looked at pupils work from other subjects.
- 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.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- Inspectors spoke to staff and different groups of pupils. They also took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Gary Kelly, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
David Roberts	Ofsted Inspector
Paula Crawley	Ofsted Inspector
Lindy Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector
Marc Heron	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025