

Inspection of a good school: King James I Academy Bishop Auckland

South Church Road, Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL14 7JZ

Inspection dates:

16 and 17 February 2022

Outcome

King James I Academy Bishop Auckland continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils have a voice at King James I Academy Bishop Auckland. Each year group votes for who will become their representatives on the 'academy council'. School leaders meet regularly with this group of pupils. They get to share their views and give suggestions on how to make improvements. Pupils are involved in shaping life in the school.

Leaders' high expectations of pupils are set out in the school's '7 Standards'. These include values such as 'be prepared' and 'engage and succeed'. Pupils understand the importance of these expectations. They enjoy coming to school. Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and make visitors feel welcome.

Pupils feel safe. They value the help that they can get from the student support team. Pupils who are less confident speaking to staff can ask for help by email or put a message in the letterboxes around the school. Most pupils told us that when bullying occurs, it is handled well by staff.

Students in the sixth form enjoy a wide range of academic and vocational courses. This includes programmes to support students who otherwise might struggle to stay in education at the end of Year 11.

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

Leaders have developed an ambitious and well-structured curriculum. Pupils study a broad range of subjects. Students in the sixth form have a rich choice of qualifications. The curriculum is well designed. Pupils build their subject knowledge from one lesson to the next and over time. Teachers make effective choices in lessons to ensure that pupils learn and remember important subject knowledge. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) get the right support. For example, in physical education, some pupils with SEND use adapted resources. They receive targeted support from teachers. This helps pupils to build their confidence in sports such as badminton and trampolining.

Leaders have identified the most important knowledge that they want pupils to learn in each subject. Teachers regularly check what pupils know and remember. The curriculum in most subjects is well designed to help pupils remember this important knowledge over time. In subjects such as English and history, pupils talk confidently about their knowledge from previous years. A small number of subjects, such as design technology and drama, are taught for one term and then not revisited for over a year. Where this is the case, the curriculum is not delivered in a way that helps pupils to consistently remember important subject knowledge from one block of learning to the next. As a result, pupils can talk about what they have learned recently in design technology but forget this over time.

In the past, very few pupils chose to study a GCSE in modern foreign languages. Leaders have strengthened the teaching of languages in school. Next year, around a quarter of Year 10 pupils will study GCSE French or Spanish. Leaders are taking further action so that more pupils will study the full range of qualifications that make up the English Baccalaureate in the future.

Reading has a high priority. Pupils who need help with reading are quickly identified. A range of effective support builds pupils' fluency and confidence in reading. This includes daily sessions for the weakest readers. A very small number of pupils need support with phonics. Leaders are making investments to strengthen the support for these pupils so that they can catch up more quickly.

Poor behaviour does not interrupt lessons. A small number of pupils need help to manage their behaviour. They appreciate the opportunity that they get to reflect on their actions. This helps them to avoid making the same mistakes again.

Leaders place high importance on pupils' personal development. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum helps prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. Pupils talk confidently about some aspects of PSHE. Year 13 students told inspectors how careers education helps them to make the right next step when they leave school. Pupils were less confident recalling what they have learned in some other PSHE topics, such as relationships education. The assessment of what pupils remember from PSHE lessons is not as strong as it is in other areas of the curriculum.

Leaders engage meaningfully with staff. For example, a teacher focus group has been set up to look at reducing workload. All staff who responded to Ofsted's staff questionnaire said that they are proud to work at the school. Teachers enjoy working in what one teacher described as 'close knit' departments. They value the opportunities to share best practice with colleagues across the school.

The governing body has an accurate view of the school. Recent appointments to the governing body have further strengthened their ability to hold leaders to account.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school's safeguarding team have a strong understanding of the local risks that pupils may face. Staff know what signs could indicate that a pupil might be at risk of harm. All staff know how to raise a concern. Safeguarding leaders ensure that pupils who need help are swiftly identified. Leaders work effectively with external agencies such as the police and local mental health services. This means that pupils get the help that they need in a timely manner.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in a small number of subjects is not planned well enough to enable pupils to remember important content over the long term. As a result, pupils have some gaps in their knowledge of these subjects. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum is planned, in all subjects, so that pupils learn and remember important content over time.
- Leaders' current system for checking that pupils know and remember the content from the PSHE curriculum is not fully effective. This means that leaders cannot fully evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum in this subject. Leaders should continue to strengthen the current system so that they can be assured that pupils know and remember important knowledge from the school's PSHE programme.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2017.

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.

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.

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	136770
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10211606
Type of school	Secondary
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	944
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	136
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Elizabeth Varley
Headteacher	Simon Whitehead
Website	www.kingjames1academy.com
Date of previous inspection	28 and 29 March 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is an average-size secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average, as is the proportion of pupils with SEND.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at three providers: Bishop Auckland College, The Bridge and Open Arms Ltd.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school 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 and the senior leadership team, middle leaders, teachers and non-teaching staff.
- The lead inspector met the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and one governor. A virtual meeting was also held with the school's improvement partner.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, history and physical education. 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 spoke to other subject leaders and looked at curriculum plans. Inspectors also met with pupils to talk about their learning in design technology, food technology, enterprise and drama.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and deputy headteacher. He also reviewed the school's safeguarding records, relevant policies and scrutinised the single central record.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils formally and informally, including pupils who are members of the school's pupil leadership group.
- Inspectors observed breaktime and lunchtime arrangements. An inspector also visited the school's inclusion centre and spoke to staff and pupils.
- An inspector held telephone conversations with representatives from two alternative provisions attended by a small number of pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- Inspectors also considered the views of staff, parents and pupils from Ofsted's questionnaires.

Inspection team

Graham Findlay, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Dimitris Spiliotis

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 2022