

Bluecoat Aspley Academy

Aspley Lane, Aspley, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG8 5GY

Inspection dates

9–10 May 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal, supported by a capable team of senior and middle leaders, provides the school with high-quality leadership. Leaders have secured improvements in different areas of the school's effectiveness and continuously strive to improve them further.
- Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Action taken to improve areas of the school that fall below the high standards they set is effective.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and understanding of British values are at the heart of the school's work.
- The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment, overall, is good. At times, teaching is highly effective. Some teaching, however, does not consistently make use of the most effective teaching approaches.
- Pupils' progress is typically good in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. However, some groups of pupils do not make the same rapid progress as other pupils. This is especially true for the boys and for the most able pupils.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is typically good. Their progress matched the national average for all pupils in 2017.
- Leaders provide pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities with valuable support. This is also true for pupils who attend the special resource provision. These groups of pupils make good progress over time.
- Leaders have established effective practices to help pupils keep safe. Pupils are cared for well. They show respect and consideration towards adults and each other.
- Pupils' behaviour and conduct are typically good. Some pupils' behaviour is exemplary. A few pupils, however, do not engage in their learning well enough.
- Pupils' attendance is above average. This is equally true for all groups of pupils.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. It encourages pupils to strengthen their knowledge about different subjects and to develop new skills.
- Students make good progress in all qualifications in the sixth form. In the past, their overall progress has been well above average.
- The academy trust provides a high level of challenge and support. The local governing body is at an early stage of its development.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and accelerate more pupils' progress, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - consistently make use of the most effective teaching approaches, as identified in the school's teaching policies
 - provide opportunities for different groups of pupils to make rapid progress, especially the boys
 - consistently engage pupils in their learning, and encourage all pupils to take responsibility for their behaviour and become self-disciplined learners
 - provide more opportunities for the most able pupils to think harder and reach higher standards in their learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The principal, senior leaders and academy trust members have high expectations. They are committed to and place a sharp focus on, improving outcomes for all pupils. Senior leaders share their vision with other staff, and most staff are supportive of the leaders' work.
- The principal has a deep and well-informed understanding of the school's effectiveness. This is based on a detailed scrutiny of how well pupils achieve compared with other pupils nationally. She knows what action to take to improve the areas identified for development. Occasionally, however, the measurable success criteria identified in the school improvement plan are not reported on in sufficient detail. Nevertheless, leadership and management are clearly improving the school's performance on a range of fronts over time.
- The principal has the support of a passionate and skilful senior and middle leadership team. Leaders with responsibility for subjects are accountable for improving the quality of teaching and accelerating pupils' progress. Their actions link precisely to achieving the success criteria set out in the school's improvement plan.
- Leaders provide pupils with a wide range of subjects and different approaches to learning. They design the school's curriculum to meet the needs of different pupils. The use of alternative education, for a few pupils, is effective and enables these pupils to complete their education and make good progress.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of British values are fundamental to the school's ethos and culture. A programme of extra-curricular activities is available for pupils to develop new skills and enjoy learning in different situations. Leaders do not tolerate any form of discrimination.
- Senior and middle leaders make effective use of comprehensive systems to improve the quality of teaching. Checks on the quality of teaching are thorough. Targeted improvement plans and bespoke training packages support teachers' development. Leaders intelligently use pupils' progress to measure improvements in the quality of teaching. A few teachers, however, do not yet routinely apply some approaches to teaching that leaders promote. Teachers have the opportunity to work together to research new ideas and ways of teaching.
- Senior leaders have established high-quality assessment systems to measure pupils' attainment and progress. Leaders check on pupils' progress frequently. Skilled analysis of this information helps leaders and teachers identify areas of strength and areas to be further improved. Comparisons with pupils' work in other schools increase the accuracy of the assessments made. Senior leaders have successfully improved pupils' progress in many areas within the school.
- Leaders spend the extra funding they receive to help different groups of pupils very wisely. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress, including those who attend the specialist resource provision. Effective use of funding has also accelerated disadvantaged pupils' progress. For example, in 2017, progress was more rapid for pupils in this group who left the school compared with those who left in 2016.

Year 7 pupils who enter the school with below-average literacy and numeracy skills benefit from valuable and tailored support. Many catch up with other pupils nationally.

- Members of the academy trust play an influential role in school improvement. Leaders also form partnerships with other schools to share and extend their knowledge and understanding of the most effective practice. The academy trust is also an accredited provider of teacher training. Leaders provide trainee teachers, and those who are newly qualified, with high-quality training programmes.
- Leaders communicate well with parents and carers. They provide them with different ways to be involved in their children's learning. Most parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey and to the school's own surveys believe that communication between school leaders and parents is effective.

Governance of the school

- The academy trust and local governing body are ambitious for the pupils. They have an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness. The academy trust provides a layer of governance that is highly skilled and experienced. Academy trust members work closely with school leaders. They provide leaders with both support and challenge to achieve the school's improvement priorities.
- Clear lines of accountability, established through a scheme of delegation, ensure that school improvement is checked and measured. The local governing body is new because of the re-structured school. Many members have recently been appointed. The local governing body members are beginning to understand their roles and responsibilities. However, some aspects of their work are at an early, developmental stage.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The academy trust and senior leaders carried out employment checks correctly. Legal requirements are met and school policies reflect the latest requirements.
- The designated teachers for child protection and safeguarding implement procedures robustly. Records are detailed and well maintained. Staff are trained effectively and understand the correct procedures to follow, including those associated with radicalisation and extremism. Leaders work well with parents and carers, and a range of other agencies, to keep pupils safe.
- The curriculum contributes effectively to raising pupils' awareness of how to keep safe, including the safe use of technology. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe. They talked confidently about being able to speak with staff if they wished. Most pupils who responded to Ofsted's pupil survey agreed with this view.
- Almost all parents who responded to the school's own surveys agree that their children are safe and cared for well. A few parents, however, who responded to Ofsted's online survey, did not share this view. Inspectors did not find their concerns to be well founded.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders strategically and systematically take action to improve the quality of teaching throughout the school. Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. There are times when teaching is highly effective. Occasionally, however, effective practice is not so evident.
- Most staff have high expectations of pupils. Pupils' attitudes towards their learning are typically positive. They listen carefully, concentrate, and work together well when asked to do so. Where pupils are currently learning well, teachers provide carefully considered learning activities to engage them. Pupils' willingness take the initiative to learn for themselves, however, varies in some lessons.
- Teachers use strong subject knowledge to plan interesting learning activities. A variety of teaching approaches and appropriate use of technology engage pupils and match their different learning styles. Teachers also use their subject knowledge to prepare pupils for examination-type questions. For example, in design and technology, marking schemes were used effectively to emphasise the subject detail needed to achieve the maximum marks available.
- Leaders provide teachers with detailed assessment information about pupils' learning needs. Teachers use this information successfully to plan activities that are well matched to the existing knowledge and understanding of the pupils. Occasionally, however, teachers do not make enough use of the information they hold to make learning accessible for some pupils.
- Teachers routinely ask questions to check pupils' understanding. Most of the time, they also ask questions to deepen and extend pupils' learning. For example, in biology, probing questions were used effectively to extend pupils' understanding of enzymes. Sometimes, however, teachers rely on pupils volunteering answers and do not probe pupils deeply enough.
- Overall, teachers provide the most able pupils with the challenge needed to reach high standards in their learning. Expectations are usually high, and tasks are often demanding. For example, in mathematics, pupils were challenged to use their trigonometry skills to test out their understanding of the sine and cosine rules. Teachers do not, however, universally adopt this high level of challenge. At times, teaching does not move the most able pupils on to harder work quickly enough or provide tasks to deepen their learning.
- Leaders require all teachers to focus on developing pupils' literacy skills. Teachers provide pupils with opportunities to develop their reading and writing skills in different subjects. They use the vocabulary and technical terms associated with their subjects accurately. Occasionally, chosen literacy activities do not match pupils' different abilities closely enough.
- Teaching assistants are effective in supporting the needs of pupils who require extra help. For example, teaching assistants used their skills well to support pupils' learning in Spanish. This increased pupils' confidence in writing their own grammatically correct sentences. Teaching assistants provide pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities with the extra support they need to make good progress.

- Teachers set homework according to the school's homework policy. They use it well to reinforce pupils' understanding. Leaders provide pupils with homework clubs and an after-school 'Raising Attainment Club'. Pupils take advantage of this club to complete their homework in a purposeful learning environment.
- In most subject areas, the school's marking and feedback policy is working well. Teachers provide useful feedback to move pupils on in their learning. Pupils generally respond positively to their teachers' suggestions. In a few cases, however, the policy is not routinely applied. Most pupils take pride in the quality of their work. At times, and especially for the boys, the presentation of work is of a lower standard.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. The efforts of staff to break down barriers to pupils' learning and provide high-quality support are exemplary. Some pupils who would otherwise find learning difficult thrive in the school.
- Pupils take pride in being a part of the school. They know that they are part of a community, and diversity in this Church of England school is welcomed. Pupils are confident and respectful towards each other and adults.
- Leaders place a strong emphasis on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leaders provide pupils with lessons in personal, social and health education, weekly assemblies and a tutor-time programme to support this. These programmes, together with a close working relationship with the diocese, prepare pupils to be thoughtful, caring and active British citizens.
- Pupils are tolerant of those from other backgrounds or with other beliefs. Leaders ensure that they learn about the different types of bullying. Pupils know what action to take if any bullying does occur. Bullying, including racism, is very rare. Staff respond effectively to any incidents of bullying when it does occur. Most parents agree that bullying is rare.
- Pupils engage in a variety of extra-curricular activities. For example, pupils take part in sports-based clubs and attend media and computing clubs. All pupils have access to a range of trips, including residential visits. Leaders also provide opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles and all pupils in Year 10 complete a week of work experience.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe, especially when using technology. Pupils explained confidently to the inspectors about keeping healthy and fit. Leaders support pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs well. A team of staff is readily available to pupils whenever they may need support.
- Leaders provide pupils with high-quality and impartial careers guidance. Pupils are encouraged and supported to make the right choices for their next stage of education or training. High aspirations for all pupils are encouraged.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Where the quality of teaching is good, pupils are actively engaged in their learning and there is little low-level disruption. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that behaviour had improved. Surveys show that most parents believe that pupils are well behaved.
- Pupils' conduct is also good and often exemplary. Pupils are polite and generally welcoming. They show good manners and wear their uniforms with pride. Pupils' conduct during social times is good.
- Leaders work successfully to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. Pupils' attendance is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from the school is also lower than the national average. Pupils typically arrive to school on time. Leaders have improved pupils' punctuality, but a small proportion of pupils remain stubbornly late.
- Overall, pupils have positive attitudes to their learning and low-level disruption is rare. For many, their behaviour is excellent. However, a small proportion of pupils do not yet display positive attitudes to learning or self-discipline.
- Leaders track incidents of poor behaviour thoroughly. Recent checks have prompted leaders into stepping up their behaviour expectations. Working together with parents, they have amended the school's behaviour policy to reflect this. Although incidents of poor behaviour still occur, they are reducing. A few pupils, however, believe that staff are not yet implementing the new policy consistently.
- Leaders check that pupils are safe and behave well in their alternative education placements. They also check that these pupils attend regularly and succeed in their qualifications. Leaders are imaginative in providing alternative avenues to keep pupils in education when their behaviour does not meet the expected standard. The number of pupils who are fixed-term excluded, therefore, is low. There have been no pupils permanently excluded from the school since 2014.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' progress is good. Pupils leave the school well prepared for their next stages of education, training or employment.
- In 2017, pupils' progress improved and overall progress was above the national average. This was also true for pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' progress in languages, however, and a range of other subjects that contribute to the 'open element', was below the national average. These were also a little lower than those seen in 2016.
- Pupils currently in the school, in all year groups, are making good progress. Progress is particularly strong in Year 7 and in Year 8. However, the school's assessment information indicates some inconsistencies in different subjects. For example, in mathematics and the separate sciences, pupils' progress is rapid, whereas in history and languages, for example, it is slower.
- In 2017, pupils' attainment increased overall to match the national average. This was not the case, however, in the proportion of pupils attaining the English Baccalaureate.

The school's assessment information indicates that in 2018, attainment is likely to be broadly similar to that achieved in 2017.

- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities typically make good progress during their time at the school. This includes the small number of pupils who attend the specialist resource provision. The high proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language make faster progress than other pupils in the school.
- Year 7 pupils who receive extra funding to improve their literacy and numeracy skills make good progress. Many of these pupils catch up with others nationally, particularly in reading.
- Pupils who attend alternative education placements make good progress in their respective courses from their different starting points.
- In 2017, the gaps in progress between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally were eliminated. This was a notable improvement on 2016. Despite disadvantaged pupils continuing to make good progress, gaps between their rate of progress and that of others have reappeared. Leaders are working successfully to rectify this.
- The most able pupils make good progress. However, the most able pupils currently in the school are not making as much progress as other pupils. This is true in a number of different subjects and in most year groups. Teachers do not use the school's assessment system well enough to identify the pupils who are likely to reach the highest grades in their GCSE qualifications.
- In both 2016 and 2017, except in mathematics, the boys have not made as much progress as the girls. The school's assessment information indicates that this trend still exists for pupils currently in the school.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leadership in the sixth form is very effective. Leaders have high expectations of students and are ambitious for what they can achieve.
- The curriculum is appropriate and adapted to meet the needs of current students. Leaders provide three different levels of qualification. Students' programmes of study effectively build on their prior attainment. Students are able to mix academic and applied courses.
- Programmes of study include a personal, social and health education programme and volunteering opportunities. During their time in the sixth form, all students take part in meaningful work experience. Students benefit from taking on roles of responsibility, such as leading acts of worship. Many also take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.
- All students receive impartial careers advice and guidance so that they can follow the most suitable course, based on their prior attainment and their career ambitions. Retention on academic courses is good. On the applied courses, it is above average. A large proportion of students go on to university when they leave school.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is effective. Teachers plan lessons that structure students' learning and make use of students' prior knowledge and skills. For example, in economics, students made convincing use of their prior learning to critically

analyse their views on industry development. Relationships between teachers and students are positive and respectful. This contributes to the good progress students make.

- Students' attendance in the sixth form is good. Their behaviour and attitudes are often exemplary and they know how to stay safe.
- Student's progress in the sixth form is consistently good. This includes outcomes from both the academic and the applied courses. In 2016, students made above-average progress overall. Over time, in most subjects and different qualification types, progress is broadly average. Some subjects have, at times, been above average. The school's assessment information indicates that, although there is some variation in different subjects, students are making good progress overall.
- Disadvantaged students make good progress. Historically, however, they have not made the same rapid progress as other students. The school's current assessment information indicates that disadvantaged students are still making slower progress than other students in the sixth form.
- Leaders provide students with appropriate opportunities to re-take their English and mathematics qualifications. Students make progress above that seen nationally in English and in mathematics.

School details

Unique reference number	137798
Local authority	Nottingham
Inspection number	10041550

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,489
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	538
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Phillip Burrell
Principal	Cath Rowell
Telephone number	0115 929 7445
Website	www.bluecoataspley.co.uk
Email address	office@bluecoataspley.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- In February 2012, the Nottingham Bluecoat Science and Technology College converted to become an academy. When Ofsted last inspected that school, in March 2011, it was judged 'good' overall. In 2014, Bluecoat Academy became a multi-academy trust. The school then joined with one of its other secondary schools and introduced a primary school to form an all-through three to 19 school under a new registration number. This school was still called the Bluecoat Academy. In October 2017, the three combined schools were re-structured into individual schools. The founding school retained the registration number, but is now named Bluecoat Aspley Academy. Bluecoat Aspley

Academy also has a sixth form registered as part of its provision. Bluecoat Academies Trust changed its name to Archway Learning Trust in 2017.

- Bluecoat Aspley Academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school. There are currently four secondary schools and one primary school within this multi-academy trust. The trustees have overall responsibility for the governance of the school. The trust delegates some of its functions to the local governing body. The school is also part of the George Spencer Teaching Alliance.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above average.
- A quarter of the pupils are White British and another quarter are Asian or Asian British Pakistani. The rest come from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well above average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is average.
- The school operates a specialist-resource provision for pupils who have autism spectrum disorder. Currently, six pupils, from different years, attend the provision. All these pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- A few pupils are taught in an alternative setting known as 'Aspire'. This is part of the academy trust. Occasionally, pupils attend the CP Riverside School, which is provided by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 42 lessons. Some of this learning was observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Discussions took place with school staff, members of the local governing body and trustees.
- The inspectors met with four groups of pupils and talked informally with pupils. The 173 responses from pupils to Ofsted's surveys were taken into account. Inspectors also listened to Year 7 pupils reading. They observed the school's act of worship, tutor time and pupils' social time.
- Inspectors took into account the 22 responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 17 free-text comments. They also considered the 87 staff responses to Ofsted's online survey.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a broad range of evidence, including the school's analysis of its strengths and weaknesses, planning and monitoring documentation, the work in pupils' books, records relating to attendance and behaviour, and the school's information on pupils' current progress and attainment in English, mathematics and a range of other subjects.
- The school's child protection and safeguarding procedures were scrutinised. Inspectors reviewed the school's website to confirm whether it met the requirements on the publication of specified information.

Inspection team

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Tracey Ydlibi	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Manz	Ofsted Inspector
Jackie Thornalley	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Henshaw	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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