

Inspection of Accrington Academy

Queens Road West, Accrington, Lancashire BB5 4FF

Inspection dates:	4 and 5 March 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Sixth-form provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The principal of this school is Jamie Peel. This school is part of United Learning, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Sir Jon Coles, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Christian Brodie.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils enjoy attending Accrington Academy. They are beginning to benefit from recent improvements to the school. For example, the school has recently revised the behaviour policy to ensure that rules are clear and understood. Pupils say that behaviour is better than before and they attend school regularly.

The school has increased both the ambition in the curriculum and its expectations of all pupils. However, improvements to the quality of education that pupils receive are still at an early stage. There is considerable variability in how the curriculum is delivered. As a result, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and students in the sixth form, do not learn as well as they should.

Pupils are kind and considerate. They forge positive relationships with staff. Most pupils, including students in the sixth form, feel safe and report having a trusted adult to speak with. Staff respond promptly and effectively when pupils share their concerns.

There are many opportunities for personal development. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities and visits, including trips abroad to Malawi and New York. Pupils enjoy opportunities to contribute to the development of the school through taking on leadership roles, for example on the school council.

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

The school has recently strengthened the curriculum. The key knowledge that pupils should learn has been identified. The school has considered how new knowledge will build on what pupils have learned before. It has led these changes with determination and drive. However, this work has not yet had an impact. Pupils do not achieve well enough.

The delivery of the curriculum, including in the sixth form, and for pupils with SEND, is inconsistent. In some subjects, teaching is well constructed. However, in others, teaching strategies, including the selection of resources, do not help pupils to learn the knowledge in the curriculum. Some activities that teachers select do not help pupils to deepen their understanding of earlier learning. This means that some pupils do not understand the key information they have been taught. As a result, they develop gaps in their knowledge.

Most teachers present information clearly, using secure subject knowledge. However, they do not consistently check pupils' existing knowledge or their understanding of new learning. Consequently, some teachers are not aware of pupils' gaps in learning, so they are unable to close these gaps. This means that sometimes pupils do not learn effectively.

Reading is a priority for the school. Pupils who are at the early stages of reading receive the support they need to become fluent readers. This support includes the school's approach to reading in form times. The school is developing more opportunities for all pupils to read widely and often.

The school is adept at identifying the needs of pupils with SEND in a timely manner. It provides teachers with useful information about the additional needs of these pupils. This helps staff to adapt how they deliver the curriculum for pupils with SEND. Nonetheless, weaknesses in how well the curriculum is delivered overall prevent some pupils with SEND from achieving as well as they should.

The school successfully supports pupils' wider development. Pupils learn to appreciate and value people's differences. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, receive useful careers information and guidance. They learn about next steps in their education and about a range of future opportunities in education and employment.

Pupils' personal, social, health and economic education gives pupils the information they need to help keep themselves healthy and safe. They learn about topics such as internet safety, healthy relationships and mental health. Pupils participate in a broad range of clubs. These range from pottery to swimming and baking.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel well supported with their workload and well-being. Trustees, governors and trust leaders are beginning to provide more effective challenge and support to the school to bring about improvements. However, this work has not yet had an impact on pupils' outcomes, which are too low.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some of the learning activities that pupils experience do not build their understanding well enough. Where this is the case, pupils do not explore topics in depth or tackle more challenging work. The school should ensure that teachers are equipped to design learning activities that sufficiently cover key curriculum content, so that pupils achieve well in these subjects.
- The checks on pupils' knowledge and understanding across the curriculum are not fully effective. As a result, pupils struggle to recall previous learning and do not build their knowledge well enough. The school should ensure that teachers use assessment strategies effectively so that pupils learn and remember the curriculum successfully in all subjects.
- The school's quality assurance systems are not as effective as they should be. This hinders the school, including those responsible for governors from having a sufficiently detailed picture of the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of education provided. The school should review its approach to quality assurance to ensure that this provides the most useful information to drive further improvement of the school.

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	135649
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10337684
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	991
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	29
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Christian Brodie
CEO of the trust	Sir Jon Coles
Principal	Jamie Peel
Website	www.accrington-academy.org
Dates of previous inspection	4 and 5 May 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The sixth-form provision is due to close in July 2025.
- Since the last inspection, the school has appointed a new principal.
- Accrington Academy is part of the United Learning Trust.
- The school uses four registered 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.
- 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 met with the principal, trust regional directors, senior leaders, subject leaders and teachers. The lead inspector also met with those with responsibility for governance, including the chair of the local governing board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, geography and design technology. 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 discussed the curriculum in some other subjects. They looked at samples of pupils' work in these subjects.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to the staff survey. Inspectors considered the views of pupils through discussions held with them during the inspection. Inspectors also reviewed the responses to the online Ofsted pupil survey.

Inspection team

Rebecca Sharples, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Dympna Woods	Ofsted Inspector
Rochelle Conefrey	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Pennington	His Majesty's 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