

Inspection of Lightcliffe Academy

Stoney Lane, Lightcliffe, Halifax, West Yorkshire HX3 8TL

Inspection dates:	24 and 25 September, and 12 and 13 November 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Jo Hackett. This school is part of Abbey Multi-Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the co-chief executive officers (CEOs), Catherine Garrett and Helen Pratten, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Gefrin Price. There is also an executive headteacher, Paul Cooper, who is responsible for this school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school shares a unified vision to transform it into one that the entire community can take pride in. This school is welcoming of, and highly ambitious for, all pupils, irrespective of their background or ability. That vision is increasingly being realised. Staff are proud to work at the school. They are excited and empowered by the changes that the school has brought about. Older pupils recognise the positive differences in their experiences at school. They speak of the school's welcoming atmosphere which enables pupils to be themselves.

Pupils benefit from a well-considered and ambitious quality of education. They respond well to the school's high expectations for their learning. Most pupils achieve well. Pupils are prepared for their next steps. Most lessons are calm so that pupils are able to concentrate on their learning. Pupils feel safe at school. They are confident to report concerns to a trusted adult.

There is a real commitment to develop pupils' readiness for life beyond school. The 'SHARED' character curriculum threads through every part of the school's work. 'Student leaders' are proud of the impact that they have in making the school and the wider community better for everyone. Sustainability leaders enjoy the partnership they have with a local university to work on a net-zero project.

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

The school is determined to ensure that pupils, including the most disadvantaged, achieve success academically. To this end, the school has thought carefully about how to ensure that pupils develop a deep body of subject knowledge so that barriers to future destinations are removed. Alongside this, the school provides rich opportunities that take account of gaps in pupils' cultural experiences. This has helped to improve pupils' confidence and has raised their aspirations for their futures.

At key stage 4, a low proportion of pupils study the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) suite of subjects. However, changes to the curriculum, alongside raised aspirations, mean that more pupils are now beginning to study EBacc subjects. Published outcomes do not reflect the significantly improved curriculum that current pupils experience. Pupils are increasingly able to know and remember the taught curriculum.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge and give clear explanations. Teachers identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and adjust their teaching accordingly. However, sometimes, teachers' choice of activities is not carefully matched to what pupils need to know and remember. When this happens, pupils are less likely to make sense of new concepts.

There is a whole-school focus to improve pupils' reading skills. Structured strategies build pupils' vocabulary and comprehension, while those pupils who find reading difficult receive the support that they need to catch up. This is helping a greater proportion of pupils to access the curriculum. This in turn is leading to their improved achievement.

The school has effective processes in place to identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Transition plans for Year 7 pupils with SEND help them to quickly settle into school life. Recent improvements in SEND provision have strengthened the support for pupils with SEND, ensuring that they more consistently receive the help and resources they need to succeed.

Pupils and staff recognise the positive change in behaviour at the school. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Pupils are polite and respectful towards one another, and to staff. However, on occasion, some staff do not consistently challenge pupils who are not fully participating in lessons. As a result, some pupils do not engage in the learning activities as well as they could.

The school prioritises pupils' regular attendance. All staff understand their role in encouraging pupils to attend school so that they can benefit from all that is on offer. The school's attendance strategy, which includes clear structures for monitoring and support, has had positive results. Many pupils, including those with a history of poor attendance, attend school more regularly than they did in the past. As a result, there is a notable upward trend in overall attendance rates.

The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education has been recently strengthened. Careers education is woven throughout the curriculum, giving pupils the information and confidence to explore different career options. Pupils benefit from a range of leadership opportunities, trips and clubs to build their confidence. The school has created opportunities as part of its curriculum and literacy strategy which have broadened pupils' experiences and their understanding of diversity.

Staff value the support that they receive from the school, including governors. The school prioritises staff's well-being and quickly addresses any concerns about workload. Staff are increasingly empowered to bring about the change that they want to see. Professional development opportunities enhance staff's expertise and morale.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some staff do not consistently ensure that pupils fully engage in learning. This means that some pupils do not benefit from the improvements that have been made to the curriculum. The school should ensure that staff consistently challenge pupils to take an active part in learning.
- Some staff do not choose the most appropriate activity to achieve the ambitious aims of the curriculum. As a result, some pupils do not build on their knowledge as well as

they could. The school should ensure that teaching practices support all pupils in learning the curriculum so that they achieve as well as they could.

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	137036
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	10323024
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	916
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gefrin Price
CEO of the trust	Catherine Garrett and Helen Pratten (Co-CEOs)
Headteacher	Paul Cooper (Executive Headteacher) Jo Hackett (Head of School)
Website	www.lightcliffeacademy.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	16 and 17 March 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Abbey Multi-Academy Trust.
- Since the last inspection in March 2022, a number of new leaders have been appointed, including the current head of school.
- The school makes use of three providers of off-site alternative education. One provider is registered and subject to inspection by Ofsted. Two providers are not registered.
- 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.

The inspection started on 24 September 2024. Inspectors returned on 13 and 14 November 2024 to gather additional evidence in line with [Ofsted inspections and visits: deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence](#) policy.

- 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 senior leaders, including the two co-CEOs of the trust, the vice-chair of the trust board and members of the local governing body. They reviewed documentation relating to governance, including minutes of the governing body and wider governance meetings.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, business and physical education. 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 considered the wider curriculum, including PSHE, and visited lessons in some 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 scrutinised a wide range of documentation relating to behaviour and attendance. Inspectors spoke to leaders, staff and pupils about these aspects.
- Inspectors met with pupils both formally and informally, including single-sex groups of pupils. The views of pupils were also considered through the Ofsted pupil survey.
- The views of staff were considered through discussions with staff and from the responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers through the responses to Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

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