

Inspection of Biddick Academy

Biddick Lane, Washington, Tyne and Wear NE38 8AL

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's curriculum is increasingly broad and ambitious for all pupils. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported.

Pupils are well informed about their next steps in education, employment or training. Leaders ensured that as much of the school's careers programme as possible continued during the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are an increasing number of opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills. Pupils enjoy their roles as student council members, prefects and library monitors. This gives them opportunities to contribute to their school.

Most pupils feel that bullying is dealt with well. However, some pupils and parents do not share this view. Some pupils are not confident to report concerns about bullying or the use of inappropriate and derogatory language.

Most pupils show positive attitudes towards their learning and behave well. Incidents leading to pupils being suspended from school have declined markedly. However, lessons are not consistently calm and orderly. Pupils told inspectors that pupils' behaviour depends on what class they are in and who is teaching them.

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

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is planned and delivered well. Curriculum leaders have considered gaps in pupils' learning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and have adapted the curriculum accordingly. This is helping pupils to catch up on any missed learning.

Pupils are well supported to develop an understanding of subject-specific vocabulary. Teachers ensure that there are opportunities for pupils to revisit previous learning. This helps to build and consolidate pupils' knowledge and understanding. Most teachers regularly check that pupils understand and remember what they have been taught. In some subjects, such as history and science, pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their knowledge in different contexts to test out theories and assumptions and carry out enquiries.

The proportion of pupils in Years 10 and 11 studying the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is below the national average. Leaders have clear plans in place to increase the number of pupils studying a modern foreign language in Years 10 and 11.

There are increasing opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills across the curriculum. Pupils who struggle with reading are well supported to improve reading fluency and comprehension.

Teachers make effective use of the information about pupils provided by the school's special educational needs team. This ensures that pupils with SEND are well supported in lessons. Pupils who attend the school's specialist resourced provision, the Unity Centre, are involved in the full life of the school. Leaders have ensured effective systems are in place to identify, assess and meet the needs of these pupils.

Leaders have developed a strong careers programme. This helps to inform pupils about opportunities for their next steps in education, employment or training. The school's effective careers programme has led to a significant increase in the number of pupils who stay in education, employment or training after Year 11. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Incidents of poor behaviour have declined significantly. Suspensions from school are much lower than they have been in the past. Fewer pupils are being removed from lessons because of poor behaviour. Many staff and pupils told inspectors that the school's approach is improving pupils' behaviour. Inspectors visited a number of lessons where pupils demonstrated positive attitudes to learning. However, the behaviour policy is not consistently applied by some staff. The behaviour of some pupils in class varies, dependent on who is teaching them.

Many pupils told inspectors that staff deal with bullying well. However, this is not the experience of all pupils. A minority of pupils feel that some staff do not deal with bullying and behaviour issues as well as they should.

The school's personal development curriculum is comprehensive. For example, pupils are taught about unhealthy relationships and online grooming. Most pupils show respectful and tolerant attitudes. However, some pupils experience inappropriate and, at times, derogatory comments. A small number of pupils do not feel confident to report this to staff. Pupils can recall what they have learned about different religions. However, they have a less confident understanding of some important British values, such as the rule of law and individual liberty.

Staff are positive about the subject-specific training that they receive. This has helped them to improve the way they plan and teach the curriculum. Leaders, including governors, consider staff's well-being. They challenge school leaders. However, governors have an overly generous view of pupils' behaviour. This has been partly affected by the pandemic, as governors have been unable to visit the school as regularly as they have done in the past.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all of the necessary checks are made on staff before they are appointed. When pupils are at risk of harm, leaders ensure that they work proactively with outside agencies to provide help and support.

Staff receive a wide range of safeguarding training and demonstrate an appropriate understanding of issues such as sexual abuse and harassment and extremism.

The curriculum helps pupils to understand the risks that they may face on and offline. The school's personal development curriculum is adapted to address any risks that arise in the local community. More recently, this has included input from the local police on antisocial behaviour and the use of social media.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some lessons are disrupted by pupils' behaviour because the school's behaviour policy is not consistently applied by all staff. This has a negative impact on pupils' learning in some classes. Leaders should ensure that the school's behaviour policy is consistently applied so that lessons are calm and orderly.
- A minority of pupils do not show respectful and tolerant attitudes. Some pupils do not feel confident to report issues such as derogatory language. Leaders should take steps to ensure that all pupils are confident to report issues to staff and that swift action is taken to eliminate inappropriate language and to deal with any bullying.
- Leaders have not given enough thought to the disciplinary knowledge that they want pupils to know in some subjects, such as history and science. As a result, teachers are unclear about what they should teach. Leaders should review plans in these subjects to ensure they precisely define the disciplinary knowledge pupils should acquire over their time at 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.

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	139839
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10200713
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1127
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mark Cowley
Headteacher	Kate Morris
Website	www.biddickacademy.com/
Date of previous inspection	22 March 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has specialist resourced provision for 35 pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. This is called the Unity Centre.
- A new headteacher and a number of new staff have been appointed since the last section 5 inspection.
- The school uses two registered alternative education providers for a small number of pupils: Beacon of Light School and Consilium Evolve.
- Biddick Academy is a single-academy trust. The trustees fulfil the role of the school's governing body.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: English, geography, art, physical education and science. Inspectors met with subject leaders, talked to pupils about their work, visited lessons, reviewed pupils work and talked to their teachers. Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, curriculum leaders, lead practitioners and a range of staff. Meetings were held with the school's designated safeguarding leader and leaders responsible for behaviour and attendance and SEND. The lead inspector met with the chair and vice-chair of the board of trustees. An inspector met with leaders responsible for the additional funding that the school receives for disadvantaged pupils and the COVID-19 catch-up premium.
- Inspectors scrutinised a number of documents relating to the school's work to safeguard pupils. Inspectors spoke to a number of staff about the training they receive to keep pupils safe and the impact of this training. The school's single central record, which includes the checks made on staff, was reviewed by an inspector.
- An inspector met with the leaders of the two alternative education providers used by the school. An inspector also talked to some of the pupils who attend alternative education provision.
- An inspector heard some Year 8 pupils read and met with leaders responsible for the school's reading programme.
- The inspection team took account of the views of 78 members of staff and 105 pupils who responded to Ofsted's surveys. Inspectors also took into account the 109 responses to Ofsted Parent View. An inspector held a telephone conversation with a parent.

Inspection team

Michele Costello, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Dimitris Spiliotis	Ofsted Inspector
Garry Stout	Ofsted Inspector
Alexandra Hook	Ofsted Inspector
Kieran McGrane	Ofsted Inspector

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