

Inspection of Pleckgate High School

Pleckgate Road, Blackburn, Lancashire BB1 8QA

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 June 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

The headteacher of this school is Aishling McGinty. This school is part of the Education Partnership Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Sharon Roscoe, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ian Brown.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at this school are strongly supported to develop aspirational goals for their future lives. They thrive in a well-established culture of high academic expectations. Pupils value the expertise and support of their teachers, who help them to develop the resilience and determination to succeed. Consequently, pupils achieve highly across the curriculum.

The school fosters a harmonious and supportive environment. Pupils learn the importance of being kind and respectful towards others. They do not tolerate discrimination in any form. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary in lessons and at social times. During transition times, they move calmly and purposefully around school. This helps pupils to feel happy and safe in school.

Pupils benefit from an extensive programme of high-quality experiences that supplement and enhance their learning, including a vast array of clubs, trips and visiting speakers. The school helps pupils to understand the importance of being active citizens and contributing to the school and to the wider community. For example, pupils take on leadership roles in school and undertake many charitable endeavours to help other people.

The school goes to great lengths to identify and overcome any barriers that may hinder pupils' participation in any aspect of school life. It is determined that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), benefit fully from the school's rich and inspiring offer.

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

The school and the trust are united in their aim to provide pupils with an education of exceptional quality. Raising aspirations is central to the school's vision. It is determined that pupils, particularly the most disadvantaged, are equipped to make ambitious choices for their next steps. The trust works closely with the school and with local governors. It has strong systems of oversight that enable it to provide the school with highly effective challenge and support.

The school ensures that pupils have the necessary knowledge and skills to benefit from the curriculum. Staff provide highly effective support to pupils who struggle with literacy. For example, they recognised that, after the COVID pandemic, more pupils needed help with their handwriting and have acted swiftly to put this in place. Gaps in pupils' reading knowledge are promptly identified and addressed. Pupils have many opportunities to enjoy reading, including by sharing novels with their tutors and regular 'book-talk' discussions in the library.

The curriculum is broad and ambitious. It has been thoughtfully designed to enable pupils to develop an impressive understanding of each subject. The school has carefully ordered learning so that pupils revisit and build on their prior knowledge. It

keeps the curriculum under regular review to ensure that it meets the specific needs and context of current pupils.

The school ensures that staff benefit from regular professional development. It provides clear guidance on what staff should be doing and when. This helps to reduce unnecessary workload. Teachers accrue the knowledge and expertise to design highly effective lessons. They make careful checks on pupils' learning; swiftly identifying and addressing any misconceptions before they become fixed in pupils' memory. As a result, pupils develop a secure body of knowledge and achieve highly.

The school identifies pupils with SEND accurately and ensures that they are well supported. Staff are well informed about these pupils. They tailor learning activities to meet pupils' additional needs effectively. This enables pupils with SEND to progress well through the curriculum.

Pupils display positive attitudes towards their learning. Staff are well trained to assist pupils who struggle to regulate their own behaviour. The school fosters a calm and welcoming atmosphere. Pupils enjoy their time at school and rates of attendance are high. The school quickly identifies any pupil whose attendance starts to decline. It works closely with parents and carers to address any issues that may prevent pupils from attending as often as they should.

Pupils benefit from an exceptionally rich and comprehensive programme of personal development. Their learning covers a broad range of topics, including health and well-being, online safety and healthy relationships. Expert staff have created safe and respectful environments that allow pupils to confidently discuss and debate their own views. Pupils receive timely guidance about careers and their next steps in education or training. This provides pupils with the knowledge that they need to make well-informed choices for their futures.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	142088
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10321447
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,362
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ian Brown
CEO of the trust	Sharon Roscoe
Headteacher	Aishling McGinty
Website	www.pleckgate.com
Dates of previous inspection	29 and 30 March 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Education Partnership Trust.
- The school uses three registered alternative provision settings for a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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 leaders, including the headteacher, and a range of staff. The lead inspector spoke with representatives of the local governing body and of the trust board, including the CEO.
- The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including leaders’ self-evaluation documents, improvement plans and minutes of meetings of the local governing body. Inspectors also reviewed records of pupils’ behaviour and attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 spoke with pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They observed pupils’ behaviour during lessons and at social times.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages, physical education and science. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and with pupils and looked at samples of pupils’ work.
- Inspectors visited lessons and reviewed pupils’ work in a small number of other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted’s online surveys for staff and for pupils.

Inspection team

Charlotte Oles, lead inspector	His Majesty’s Inspector
Emma Gregory	Ofsted Inspector
Derek Yarwood	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Rigby	Ofsted Inspector
David Roberts	Ofsted Inspector
Gil Bourgade	Ofsted Inspector

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