

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Airedale Infant Academy

Poplar Avenue, Castleford WF10 3QJ

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 June 2025

Outcome

Airedale Infant Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Kirsten McKechnie. This school is part of Castleford Academy 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), George Panayiotou, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Adam Fletcher.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils know staff care about them and want them to achieve highly. Pupils behave well. They are familiar with routines and expectations. Pupils respond quickly to the instructions of adults. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress throughout the curriculum. Teachers adapt learning so that all pupils can learn together. Most pupils are ready for the next stage of education when they join the junior school in the same building.

The school ensures that pupils become active members of the community they live in. They explore the local area in geography lessons. Pupils make signs for bins and litter-pick to improve the area they live in. School staff have positive relationships with families. Parents and carers appreciate the support offered to them by the school.

Pupils enjoy a range of after-school clubs. The school offers clubs based on pupils' interests. Cooking, gardening, sports, dance and sewing clubs are on offer. Pupils have visited a wildlife park and a science museum. They remember what they learned during these trips.

Pupils are safe in school. They have positive relationships with staff and know that adults in school will help them.

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

Pupils become confident, fluent and enthusiastic readers. They quickly learn to read through the school's phonics scheme. Teachers are well trained and deliver phonics lessons consistently well. Pupils who need extra support with learning to read have additional lessons. Some pupils with SEND have bespoke phonics lessons to ensure their success in learning to read. Pupils are encouraged to read at home. Parent workshops help to support pupils at home when reading. The school provides a wide range of reading books in the library and pupils visit and join the local public library. This helps to foster a love of reading.

Pupils have not always achieved as well as they could when learning to write. The school has acted on this and made changes to the writing curriculum. Pupils now learn the knowledge and skills they need over time. In the early years, there are many opportunities for children to learn to write. Children progress from writing individual letters to writing sentences. They choose to write when playing in the provision areas. Older pupils use the skills they have learned to produce longer pieces of writing. The school is monitoring the impact of the changes to ensure that outcomes for pupils in writing improve.

In the early years, children get off to a flying start. Staff quickly identify pupils with SEND. Additional support is quickly put in place for pupils who need it. Staff focus on language development. Children quickly learn new words. They learn to play well together. Children focus well on activities, even when working and playing independently. Children took part in a treasure hunt outdoors with a member of staff, using new language linked to their pirate topic.

The curriculum is well established. Staff know what to teach and when. They know what pupils have learned in the past. This helps them support pupils to recall important knowledge. In many subjects, pupils learn about different inspirational people, religions and cultures. This helps them to be tolerant and accepting of others.

The school has designed a strong personal development offer. The offer is woven throughout the curriculum. Trips, experiences and visitors link to curriculum learning. Learning is brought to life. This helps pupils to remember what they learn. Pupils know how to stay safe. The curriculum includes teaching about local risks that pupils may face. For example, pupils know how to stay safe around water and when online.

The school's work to improve attendance has not always been successful. Some pupils still do not attend school regularly enough. Consequently, they miss out on vital learning. The trust has invested in additional resources to ensure that the school can support families effectively with attendance. It is too early to see the impact of this investment. The school understands how important it is for pupils to attend school regularly.

Leaders at all levels have a common, shared vision to improve the lives of pupils. Since joining the trust in February 2025, trust leaders, governors and school leaders have

already forged positive working relationships. Staff feel supported by leaders. Their workload and well-being are considered. Staff are happy to work in the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not always ensured that all pupils attend well. There are gaps in attendance for some groups of pupils. This means that some pupils miss out on vital parts of learning. The school should ensure that the work to address pupils' absence leads to consistently improved attendance for all pupils.
- The school has not enabled some pupils to achieve as highly in their writing and transcription skills as they should. Over time, pupils have not had enough opportunities to develop their writing skills. The school should continue to implement and evaluate the recent changes to the writing curriculum to ensure that they are having the required impact.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in November 2019.

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	141522
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10346554
Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	227
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Adam Fletcher
CEO of the trust	George Panayiotou
Headteacher	Kirsten McKechnie
Website	www.airedaleinfants.com
Dates of previous inspection	5 and 6 November 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school joined Castleford Academy Trust in February 2025.
- The school shares a building with the junior school, which is also part of Castleford Academy Trust.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school provides a breakfast club and a range of after-school clubs for pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with senior staff in the school. This included the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. The inspector also met with governors, trustees and the CEO of the trust.
- The inspector 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. The inspector looked at writing across the school.
- The inspector spoke to pupils informally about their learning and their experiences at school. The inspector also spoke to parents at the school gate.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour throughout the school day, including during lesson visits and at breaktime and lunchtime. The inspector spoke to staff and pupils about their views on behaviour at the school.
- The inspector reviewed the parental responses received through the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. The inspector also considered the responses received through Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Helen Haunch, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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