

# Inspection of Furness Academy

Park Drive, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria LA13 9BB

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Inspection dates: 13 and 14 March 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils at Furness Academy have been able to benefit from transformational changes to the school for the better over recent years. Leaders have realised their clear vision to raise expectations for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Leaders have set out high expectations for both pupils' behaviour and achievement. Pupils have risen to this challenge admirably, and this has benefited the whole school community. Leaders have created a calm, purposeful atmosphere. There are clear and consistent routines in place for staff to manage pupils' conduct. Pupils behave well during lessons, and they are keen to try their best. As a result, current pupils achieve well in most subjects.

Pupils comment that they feel safe and happy at school. They talked positively to inspectors about their time at school. Pupils treat each other with respect. Staff have forged respectful, positive and caring relationships with pupils.

Leaders have ensured that there are effective systems in place to deal with incidents of bullying. Pupils say that bullying is not tolerated and that, when it does happen, it is dealt with quickly and appropriately.

Pupils are afforded a wealth of opportunities to gain from a wide and diverse range of valuable experiences. For instance, international exchange trips to Germany and New York help students to experience the wider world. Many pupils relish the chance to learn the flute or violin. Added to this, pupils have opportunities to perform on stage in dramatic productions at a range of venues across the country.

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

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is suitably ambitious for pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. For example, an increasing proportion of pupils are choosing to study the subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate in key stage 4. Leaders afford pupils with a wide range of courses to choose to study at GCSE. They have thought carefully about how to successfully raise pupils' aspirations alongside meeting local employment needs, such as those in technology and engineering.

To improve the quality of education for pupils, leaders have made sure that teachers are clear about what pupils should learn and when content should be delivered. As a result, current pupils build securely on what they know already, and they develop a deep body of subject knowledge over time. This is especially the case for those pupils in key stage 3.

Teachers are equipped well to deliver subject curriculums skilfully and present new ideas to pupils with clarity. Added to this, leaders have ensured that teachers receive

appropriate information and guidance to design learning. This means that, for the most part, teachers use their strong subject knowledge to select appropriate activities so that pupils learn the intended curriculum. In the main, current pupils achieve well.

Leaders are aware that some older pupils have been unable to benefit fully from their improvements to how well the curriculum is designed and delivered. To address this, leaders have prioritised timely and appropriate support for these older pupils in key stage 4. For example, leaders have adapted the content of some subject curriculums. This is helping teachers to systematically address the gaps in these pupils' knowledge.

Mostly, teachers use assessment strategies skilfully to check on pupils' understanding of prior learning and identify any misconceptions. However, occasionally, in a small number of subjects, teachers do not use assessment strategies as well to rectify pupils' misunderstandings. In these subjects, this prevents some pupils from having a strong foundation on which to build and learn as well as they should.

Leaders have effective systems in place to identify those pupils who join the school that have fallen behind in reading. These pupils receive appropriate support to catch up quickly.

Staff are trained appropriately to identify the needs of pupils with SEND at the earliest possible stage. Leaders provide teachers with sufficient information about the individual needs of pupils with SEND. This helps teachers to adapt how they deliver the curriculum for this group of pupils. When appropriate, pupils with SEND follow the same curriculum as their peers. They take part in all other aspects of school life.

Staff and pupils are clear about leaders' expectations for pupils' behaviour. Staff use leaders' systems to manage pupils' behaviour consistently well. During lessons, disruption to pupils' learning is rare. Pupils learn to understand and appreciate difference and about the benefits of living in a diverse society. Pupils are keen to take part in leadership roles, such as acting as representatives on the committee for 'student voice'.

Leaders ensure that all pupils benefit from a well-designed and coherent careers programme, which is delivered by knowledgeable staff. Leaders have forged strong and effective links with apprenticeship providers and local employers. This means that pupils are well informed about the options available to them when they leave school.

Staff comment that they feel appreciated by leaders and that leaders are cognisant of their workload. Staff value the professional development they receive. For example, teachers benefit from frequent opportunities to hone their subject expertise. Governors and trustees have a clear understanding of the school's

strengths and leaders' priorities for further development. Those responsible for governance support and challenge leaders effectively.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding practices and procedures are thorough and robust. Members of the safeguarding team are particularly knowledgeable about those issues that pupils may face in the local community. Leaders make sure that staff receive regular safeguarding training. This means that staff are alert to the signs that may indicate a pupil is at risk.

In recent months, leaders have invested to increase the wealth of safeguarding expertise within the school. Staff work closely with external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive appropriate help when needed.

Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe. Leaders remain up to date about safeguarding matters and adapt the curriculum to ensure that pupils' learning about staying safe is timely and relevant.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In a small number of subjects, from time to time, some teachers do not use assessment strategies well to rectify pupils' misunderstandings. This hinders some pupils' learning in these subjects. Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment strategies effectively to address pupils' misconceptions so that they have a strong foundation for subsequent learning.

## **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](#)' 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135940
<b>Local authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	10242075
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,152
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Adam Hearnden
<b>Headteacher</b>	Simon Laheney
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.furnessacademy.co.uk">www.furnessacademy.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19 and 20 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school uses seven registered and three unregistered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 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.

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

- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and other members of staff. Inspectors spoke with representatives of the board of trustees.
- As part of this inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in mathematics, history, modern foreign languages, art and design, science and design and technology. Inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss curriculums. They visited lessons, reviewed samples of pupils' work, spoke with teachers and spoke with pupils about their learning in these subjects. Inspectors also reviewed pupils' work and visited lessons in other subjects.
- Inspectors checked on leaders' safeguarding procedures, including the checks made when new staff are appointed. Inspectors met with those responsible for governance, and they spoke with leaders, staff, pupils and students to evaluate the culture of safeguarding at the school.
- Inspectors considered the views of the parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. This included the comments received via Ofsted's free-text facility. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for pupils and staff.
- Inspectors met with pupils from all year groups. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour at social times and observed pupils as they moved around the school site.

## Inspection team

Phill Walmsley, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Cox	Ofsted Inspector
Paula Crawley	Ofsted Inspector
Lindy Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Edmondson	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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