

# Inspection of Blackwater Academy

68–69 Cecil Street, Birmingham B19 3SU

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Inspection dates: 26 to 28 April 2022

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Insufficient evidence</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	<b>Yes</b>

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

This school provides a fresh start for pupils who have previously disengaged from learning. Most pupils arrive disillusioned and often ready to give up on education. They say this school is different because teachers believe in them.

Leaders are aspirational, they want all pupils to leave school with meaningful qualifications. Continual encouragement and support from all staff help pupils to achieve more than they thought possible.

The majority of pupils engage well in classes and do well because teachers usually take their needs into account. Rarely, where a few pupils need additional support, particularly with reading, some teachers lack expertise to deliver learning that consistently meets pupils' needs.

Well-planned careers education means that pupils are prepared for their next phase. They engage well in work experience and can make informed decisions. Pupils speak about their futures with excitement.

Pupils generally behave well because of teachers' high expectations. Pupils say that bullying is not tolerated. They say they feel safe in school and that staff would resolve any problems.

A few pupils do not attend school on time or regularly enough. This impacts negatively on their learning. While there are processes in place to follow up on poor attendance and lateness, this does not improve for all pupils.

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

Pupils typically start at the school following long periods of absence from education. This means that many are disengaged on arrival and many have given up on school. Leaders set about establishing a culture where every pupil is valued and supported to become the best that they can be. For this reason, all pupils are expected to leave with useful qualifications. The majority of pupils are well prepared for their futures.

The curriculum is broad and rich. Learning extends beyond academic subjects to include practical subjects and work experience. Pupils do well because teachers carefully plan and deliver the subject content that they need to learn. Teachers know what pupils need to learn and the order in which they need to learn it. This helps pupils to build on what they already know. Teachers demonstrate expert subject knowledge, particularly in English, mathematics and history. Pupils make links in historical content and speak confidently about important factors that shaped the past. Similarly, they can recall key themes from the books they have read. Pupils are enthused to learn. They ask relevant questions and are keen to talk about what they have learned and remembered. They are proud of their achievements.

A small number of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These pupils do not do as well as they could because a few teachers lack the expertise to adapt learning effectively. These teachers tend to provide too much support instead of equipping pupils with strategies to gain independence in their own learning.

Most pupils read fluently. They comprehend a range of fictional texts and factual content and read aloud with confidence. A small number of pupils struggle with reading. Support for these less-confident readers is not consistent. While some teachers provide effective support, there is a reliance to 'over help' pupils and read words for them. Pupils, therefore, do not learn how to use phonetic skills to decode difficult words. Equally, comprehension for these pupils is weaker. They do not grasp the meaning of trickier words and how they fit into context.

Many pupils have had limited access to wider learning and cultural experiences prior to attending the school. Pupils enjoy educational visits, including trips to museums, castles and a residential trip to Auschwitz. Pupils value these visits and speak about them enthusiastically. These opportunities benefit pupils, providing them with rich learning experiences. The curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) takes the needs of pupils into account. Leaders have carefully thought about and met their statutory responsibilities in implementing relationships and sex education. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and how to keep themselves safe. The school community is diverse. Pupils learn about, value and celebrate differences in culture and belief. They say the school feels like 'one big family'.

Careers education is carefully planned. Pupils engage well in focused employability sessions. This work is supplemented by an external agency to ensure that pupils receive impartial advice and guidance. Pupils enjoy work experience and develop appropriate skills in their sector of choice. All pupils are well prepared for their next phase of education, employment or training.

Pupils behave well. The pupils spoken to say that bullying does not happen. They are confident that staff would resolve any problems should they arise. They display positive attitudes to their learning and invest in their futures.

The proprietor and governors meet regularly with leaders to review the performance of the school. They meet their duties under schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and have produced a detailed accessibility plan. Those responsible for governance understand the independent school standards. Through regular checks and monitoring, they make sure that these are consistently met. A small number of areas needed attention at the point of inspection to ensure compliance.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school's safeguarding policy is available online. It is written with due regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State. Paper copies are also available from the school.

All staff are appropriately trained and take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. They know how to recognise signs of abuse and neglect. Staff are quick to report any concerns. The systems for monitoring and recording concerns are robust. Leaders follow rigorous processes to ensure that staff are recruited safely to the school.

A well-established culture of safeguarding underpins the safety of pupils.

## **What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)**

- A small number of teachers do not fully understand the additional needs of their pupils. This means that pupils with SEND do not do as well as they could. Leaders need to continue their focus in this area. They need to make sure that all staff are appropriately trained and supported to ensure they have the expertise to support all pupils with SEND.
- A few pupils struggle to apply their phonics skills to read tricky words. Teachers tend to 'over help' these pupils by providing them with the word. Leaders need to make sure that all teachers have the appropriate expertise to teach phonics effectively. Teachers need specific training to ensure pupils learn to read confidently and fluently.
- A few pupils do not attend school on time or regularly enough. This means that they miss too much content, which impacts negatively on their learning. Leaders need to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly and promptly.

## **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 provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	143039
<b>DfE registration number</b>	330/6026
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10220515
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	12 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	58
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	0
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	6
<b>Proprietor</b>	Nauman Tassawer
<b>Chair</b>	Andra Iordache
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kyle Morrison
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£10,000 to £60,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 2380758
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.blackwateracademy.co.uk">www.blackwateracademy.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:info@blackwateracademy.co.uk">info@blackwateracademy.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	22–24 May 2018

## Information about this school

- Blackwater Academy offers places for pupils aged 11 to 18 who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. There are no post-16 pupils currently on roll at the school.
- The school is housed in a former day care centre. Pupils have access to spacious learning areas and a small outdoor space. Pupils also access local leisure facilities for physical education.
- The school makes use of alternative provision at Aston Villa Football Club, where pupils can access character education, employability and sports twice weekly. This provision is not registered with Ofsted. Year 11 pupils access work experience arranged through Work and Learn, based in Hockley, Birmingham. Pupils who attend the school on a part-time basis attend the provisions outside of these hours.
- The school was last inspected in May 2018 when it was judged to be good in all areas.

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Meetings were also held with the proprietor and chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, including reading, mathematics, history and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, discussed 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 also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about other subjects, including PSHE.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leaders to review the school's processes for keeping children safe. The school's single central record was also checked.
- A number of key policies were also reviewed, including those related to anti-bullying, attendance, the curriculum, complaints, health and safety and first aid.

The lead inspector also toured the premises to check compliance with the independent school standards.

### **Inspection team**

Melanie Callaghan-Lewis, lead inspector      Ofsted Inspector

Ant Edkins      Ofsted Inspector

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