

# Inspection of Millbay Academy

22 Millbay Road, Plymouth, Devon PL1 3EG

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Inspection dates: 27 to 28 February 2024

<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>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The executive headteacher of this school is Jo Ware. The headteacher of the primary phase is Steph Macdonald. This school is part of Reach South 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, Dean Ashton, and is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Marcus Agius CBE.

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

Millbay Academy has been through a period of transformation. Staff are aspirational for what pupils have the potential to achieve, whatever their needs or the wider challenges they may face. From when children join in the early years, staff ensure the curriculum provides no limits or barriers to their future success. The school's motto of 'think like a creative' is understood and valued by staff and pupils. Together, they are proud to belong to this culturally-diverse community.

Pupils exude kindness. They speak to staff and visitors with warmth and respect. They hold doors open and are extremely polite. Many pupils join at different points of the school year. Whenever they join, each new pupil gets the help they need to settle in swiftly. Pupils talk animatedly about their enjoyment of school. Parents echo this positive view.

Staff and pupils enjoy caring, trusting relationships. Pupils talk to staff about any concerns or worries they have. This helps them to be safe. Pupils have a strong voice in changes that are made at the school. This starts at primary with the pupil parliament and continues as pupils move up through the school. The school provides a wide set of rich experiences which many pupils take part in. Many join clubs to learn new skills, such as Japanese, chess, basketball and breakdancing.

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

The trust and the newly-established school leadership team have secured rapid improvements to the quality of education that pupils experience. Although more embedded within the primary phase, all pupils benefit from a high-quality curriculum. Teachers are experts in their subjects and there is a well-planned professional development programme to enhance this further. This means staff are well supported and say they have been re-energised in their roles. However, the school does not share the strongest practice that exists within the school across both phases of education and between curriculum areas.

The school is ambitious for the significant number of pupils who have an education, health and care plan. Pupils who need a personalised approach attend the school's HIVE provision, where they follow an appropriate curriculum. Most pupils then successfully integrate back into their regular classes. Across the school, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Staff get to know pupils' dreams and aspirations, as well as what strategies will help them to learn effectively. This careful consideration supports pupils with SEND to successfully take their next steps when leaving school.

The early years provision is a strength of the school. Children in Reception Year respond positively to challenging tasks. They do not give up easily. They are eager to participate in the activities planned as part of the curriculum. For example, children use water play to explore the theme of the ocean. They remember and

apply their learning to new topics confidently. The school and the trust have prioritised that pupils learn to read quickly and with confidence.

Children in Reception Year follow the school's chosen phonics programme as soon as they join the school. If they start to fall behind, the school identifies this swiftly and provides appropriate support. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their transition to Year 7. At secondary level, pupils read twelve diverse novels as part of their English and tutor reading curriculum. Pupils with SEND benefit from specific teaching to develop their phonic knowledge and fluency in reading. However, the support for other pupils to improve their reading ability is in its early stages.

The curriculum in key stages 3 and 4 has undergone extensive recent change. In most subjects, there is clarity over precisely what pupils should learn and when they should learn it. Staff expertly check that pupils have learned what was intended. However, these changes are not reflected in historic published outcomes at key stage 4. These outcomes do not reflect how successfully current pupils learn the curriculum.

Most pupils want to attend school and they value their education. However, some pupils in the secondary phase are absent from school too frequently. At times, this is due to suspensions from school. School leaders, with the support of the trust, have increased the help in place for pupils and their families. This has led to improvements for some individual pupils in terms of their behaviour and attendance. This is further enhanced by the culture of the school. Pupils know that poor behaviour is not tolerated.

Careers provision is an important part of the school's offer. Pupils broaden their horizons and develop their employability skills. For example, there are 'pop up' opportunities to learn about specific industries over lunch times. Pupils learn about topics that are important to their personal development. For example, they learn to recognise risky behaviours, know how to stay safe when online and are knowledgeable about how to look after their physical and mental health.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- In the secondary phase, some pupils miss a significant amount of learning time due to being absent from school. This includes absence due to suspension. As a result, pupils develop gaps in their knowledge and find returning to school difficult. The school should further develop their work with pupils and their families to overcome any barriers that prevent them from attending school regularly.

- Staff are not always aware of where the strongest practice exists in the school to help them plan and teach the curriculum, particularly between the primary and secondary phases. Therefore, there is variability in how well the curriculum is taught and the impact that it has on pupils' learning. The school should share the best practice that exists, so that all pupils benefit from a high-quality experience.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	147905
<b>Local authority</b>	Plymouth
<b>Inspection number</b>	10298095
<b>Type of school</b>	All-through
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	548
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Marcus Agius CBE
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Dean Ashton
<b>Executive headteacher</b>	Jo Ware
<b>Primary phase headteacher</b>	Steph Macdonald
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.millbayacademy.org">www.millbayacademy.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school is part of Reach South Academy Trust.
- Millbay Academy has joined with High Street Primary to form Millbay High Street (MBHS).
- The school uses two registered and four unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- Millbay Academy converted to become an academy in March 2020. When its predecessor school, Plymouth School of Creative Arts, was previously inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall.

## Information about this inspection

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

- This was an inspection of an all through school. When inspecting in the primary phase, inspectors only took account of the experiences of Millbay Academy pupils.
- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the executive headteacher, the primary phase headteacher, other senior leaders, the special educational needs and/or disabilities co-ordinators across both phases, subject leaders, members of the local governing body, trust officers and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, including early reading, mathematics, geography, and drama. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- 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 considered responses to the online survey for parents and carers, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also considered responses to the staff survey and responses to the survey for pupils.

## Inspection team

Kelly Olive, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Simon Tong	Ofsted Inspector
Kevin Martin	Ofsted Inspector

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