

Inspection of The Boxing Academy AP Free School

23 Hackney Grove, Hackney, London E8 3NR

Inspection dates: 4–5 February 2020

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are welcomed into a warm, nurturing and respectful community where they can learn and grow emotionally and socially. Pupils benefit from being in a small group, or pod. The pod leaders, who are all boxing coaches, offer bespoke mentoring to each pupil throughout the day. Together, pupils and their pod leaders, attend lessons, study, work out and learn to box. They form trusting relationships. Very quickly, pupils learn how important it is to stay physically and mentally healthy. They begin to take control of their lives, their studies and their well-being. Their self-esteem improves. Pupils start to make good decisions as successful citizens.

All staff believe that pupils can achieve highly. They aim for pupils to develop strength of character and be able to flourish in society. Expectations are very high. Pupils quickly learn how to behave. They know that everyone is to be treated well and with respect. Pupils learn that self-discipline will lead to personal success. Pupils are keen to earn merits. Inappropriate behaviour and incidents of bullying are not tolerated by anyone. Pupils know that poor behaviour quickly results in push-ups or gym-cleaning duties. The pod leaders' quiet assurance and knowledge of each pupil mean that any incidents are quickly resolved.

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

The Boxing Academy aims to create resilient, self-disciplined, confident and successful young adults. The principal's inspirational leadership has ensured the school's continued success. With her committed and talented team, she has created a curriculum that leads to academic achievement and very strong personal development. Staff prioritise pupils' social and emotional needs, so that they can nurture their academic ability. Pupils are encouraged to look at their own identity first. They can then explore how they fit into the community, the capital and the wider world. As one ex-pupil said: 'If you go into a boxing ring angry, you will get knocked out; if you go into society angry you will get knocked out – thoughtful words are all the ammunition you need.'

The curriculum is designed to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. Staff quickly get to know each pupil, so that they can provide individualised support. They model the personal characteristics and traits needed to be a successful adult. They listen carefully to pupils' concerns and interests. Staff plan visits and activities that inspire and ignite pupils' interests and understanding of other cultures, for instance the yearly ski-trip, which is free to pupils, and visits to galleries and universities. They organise speakers and events to keep pupils informed and aware. Staff ensure that every pupil goes on to suitable education and training when they leave.

Pupils follow courses leading to GCSE qualifications. These have been deliberately chosen to give pupils a concrete starting point for future study. Teachers quickly assess pupils' academic needs. They know that many have gaps in their learning. Some have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The needs of these pupils are met. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. They design activities

that stretch and engage each pupil. For example, they use cameras to explore photographic techniques in art and use interactive software when studying anatomy.

The pod leaders seamlessly support pupils' learning in class. Expectations are very high. Classrooms are quiet and purposeful places to learn. Behaviour is invariably impeccable. Pupils show a genuine interest in their studies. They can talk about what they have learned and what they still need to do. Pupils are clear that they need to work hard to be successful. For many, their attendance at school has improved dramatically. Pupils are proud of their achievements.

During boxing sessions and health and fitness, pupils learn about technique, self-discipline and personal health and well-being. All participate enthusiastically. They learn how to manage their anger and work collaboratively and respectfully. The pod leaders use their professional coaching techniques to instil pride, discipline and fitness. Pupils learn about physiology and how to keep themselves healthy and well. These sessions build very strong, trusting relationships between the pupils and their pod leaders.

Improving literacy is a high priority. Pupils are expected to talk in standard English and articulate their thoughts with clarity. Discussion around moral and social issues is part of the daily life of the academy. Staff encourage pupils to read widely. They debate current affairs and learn new vocabulary.

Leaders and governors have created a safe and nurturing environment for staff and pupils. There is a collective vision and genuine passion to improve the life chances of the young people. Staff are highly committed and stable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The experienced designated safeguarding lead ensures that all referrals to external agencies are recorded in detail, that follow-up actions are prompt and that families get early help. All staff are well trained and know their statutory responsibilities. They are aware of the risks for young people in the community, including radicalisation, gang affiliation, child sexual exploitation, knife crime and criminality. Staff are highly vigilant. Concerns are shared formally and in the daily staff meeting. Staff work closely with parents, carers and external agencies. The safer schools officers are highly complimentary about the academy. They say that staff deal promptly and calmly with any issues.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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 school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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

Unique reference number	143103
Local authority	Hackney
Inspection number	10121644
Type of school	Free school alternative provision
School category	Free school alternative provision
Age range of pupils	14 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	14
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Trisha Jaffe
Principal	Anna Cain
Website	www.theboxingacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Boxing Academy alternative provision free school takes pupils aged 14 to 16 who have been excluded from mainstream schools or pupil referral units. It is a single academy trust: The Boxing Academy Trust.
- Approximately two thirds of pupils are dual registered with another provider.
- A fifth of pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The academy does not use any alternative provision. All pupils are educated on site.
- When the predecessor school, The Boxing Academy Independent School, was inspected, it was judged to be good.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We considered the quality of education provided by the school. We did deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, art, boxing and health and fitness. This included visits to lessons, discussions with subject leads/teachers and pupils, and looking at pupils' work.

- We spoke with school leaders, representatives from the governing body including the chair, a local authority officer and two safer schools officers. We spoke with the pod leaders and a former pupil.
- We reviewed safeguarding records, policies and procedures. We checked the school's procedures for ensuring the safe recruitment of staff.
- No parents responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. However, we took into consideration parent surveys collated by school leaders during a recent progress evening in January 2020. Staff views were collected by talking to individual staff members and small groups.
- We scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance, minutes of meetings, the school's self-evaluation documentation and the school development plan.
- We observed the start-of-the-day arrangements and spoke with pupils and staff during breaktimes.

Inspection team

Helen Matthews, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Teresa Neary

Ofsted Inspector

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