

Inspection of City of Derby Academy

Farmhouse Road, Sinfin, Derby, Derbyshire DE24 3AR

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 March 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Adrian Harding. This school is part of QEGSMAT multi-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, Anne Martin, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sue Hall.

What is it like to attend this school?

City of Derby Academy is a school that welcomes and celebrates the diversity of the local community. There is a caring ethos. Pupils feel safe. The vast majority are happy.

There are strong relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils receive high-quality pastoral support. They know that staff are always available to talk to them if they have concerns. Pupils say that when there are disagreements, or when bullying happens, leaders deal with these quickly.

Pupils are polite and respectful to each other and adults. Pupils value earning points for positive behaviour, effort and good attendance.

Pupils benefit from a range of extra-curricular activities, such as football, netball, choir and drama. They develop their leadership skills as school councillors and student ambassadors. Visits to the coast and to London broaden pupils' horizons beyond the local area.

The school has high expectations of all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who speak English as an additional language are well supported to learn the curriculum. The curriculum has improved since the last inspection, but it is still not as effective as it should be. As a result, the quality of education that pupils receive continues to require improvement.

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

The school has improved the curriculum. It is now broad and ambitious. The knowledge that pupils need to learn in each subject has been logically sequenced. Pupils revisit important learning over time. In the majority of subjects, teachers make sure that pupils understand and use specific words that are important to their learning. For example, pupils accurately use terms such as 'tempo', 'pitch', 'rhythm' and 'melody' in music in Year 9. However, in some subjects, weaknesses in the delivery of the curriculum remain.

In subjects where the curriculum is taught well, teachers check on pupils' learning skilfully. They check that pupils remember content before moving on. However, in other subjects, teachers do not check closely enough on what pupils know. They do not ask questions that challenge pupils to think about what they have learned. As a result, there are some gaps in pupils' knowledge.

The school prioritises reading. New strategies to develop a love of reading across the school have been introduced. Teachers are being trained in phonics to help those who are at an early stage of learning to read. However, while showing some green shoots, it is too early to see the full impact of this work. Opportunities for pupils to read in lessons beyond Year 8 are limited.

Behaviour has improved. The majority of pupils behave well in and out of lessons. Staff have been trained to manage behaviour through building relationships. This has reduced the number of incidents of poor behaviour. However, in a small number of cases, staff do not apply the school's behaviour policy as closely as they should.

For some pupils, rates of absence remain high. However, the school works tirelessly with pupils and their families to secure positive attendance. This work is having a positive impact, and attendance is improving.

The school contribution to pupils' personal development is well organised. Pupils learn about healthy relationships. They understand and respect the different opinions and beliefs that others may hold. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. The school celebrates difference and diversity in the local community through events such as Culture Day. Pupils understand British values. They benefit from a strong careers programme. They have opportunities to consider the different training options available to them post-16.

Leaders have secured many improvements since the school's last inspection. The curriculum has been strengthened. Behaviour is now good. The multi-academy trust and governors remain committed to improving the life chances of all pupils. Trustees and local governors are very well informed about the work of the school. They hold leaders to account. Leaders consider staff's well-being and workload. Staff overwhelmingly enjoy working at 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)

- In some subjects, teachers do not check closely enough on what pupils know. They do not pose questions skilfully enough. They move on to new learning before pupils' knowledge is secure. As a result, there are some gaps in what pupils know and remember. The school should ensure that all teachers accurately check on what pupils know and use this to inform their teaching.
- The teaching of phonics is at an early stage of implementation. Pupils cannot yet consistently use phonics to read unfamiliar words accurately. The school should continue to implement and embed its approach to teaching phonics so that all pupils become successful readers.
- There are limited opportunities for pupils to read in lessons beyond Year 8. There are few texts linked to learning in other subjects. As a result, pupils do not read as widely as they should. The school should ensure that reading is consistently prioritised and promoted across the curriculum in all year groups.

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	145132
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	10324197
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	986
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sue Hall
CEO of trust	Anne Martin
Headteacher	Adrian Harding
Website	www.cityofderbyacademy.org
Dates of previous inspection	1 and 2 March 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The City of Derby Academy joined QEGSMAT multi-academy trust in September 2017.
- The school provides full-time alternative education for a small number of pupils at two registered providers. The school also uses two unregistered alternative education providers for a small number of pupils.
- The school meets all the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders responsible for behaviour, attendance, reading and personal development. Inspectors also held discussions with the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, and curriculum leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, geography, and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors 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.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from key stages 3 and 4.
- An inspector listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- 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 pupils' behaviour at various times of day, including in lessons, around the school site and at lunchtime.
- The lead inspector took account of the responses to the Ofsted online surveys for staff, and parents and carers.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the local board of governors and representatives of the board of trustees.

Inspection team

Stephen Long, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Jules Gordon	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Davies	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Heery	Ofsted Inspector

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