

Reach School

High Street, Kings Heath, Birmingham, West Midlands B14 7BB

Inspection dates

23–24 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Staff and governors share leaders’ enthusiasm and commitment to securing the best outcomes for pupils. Carefully planned actions have improved the school’s overall effectiveness.
- A broad curriculum successfully engages pupils with learning. Pupils study academic qualifications, work-related learning and develop wider skills.
- Almost all pupils move on successfully from Reach School to further education or to employment with training.
- Staff create and sustain positive relationships with pupils. These relationships contribute strongly to a positive learning environment.
- Pupils value the support that they receive. They are proud of their achievements.
- As a result of effective teaching, pupils get back on track with their learning and make progress at Reach School. Pupils’ achievement in English and mathematics is good.
- Leaders and governors do not fully evaluate the outcomes of vocational qualifications or how well pupils’ wider skills develop.
- Outcomes are uneven across the range of qualifications the school offers.
- Attendance is too low for some pupils. This affects how well they do.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the performance measures that leaders use to describe and evaluate the school's success by:
 - reviewing how vocational qualifications contribute to these measures
 - including information about the wider skills and qualities that pupils develop.
- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment so that they achieve consistently high levels of success across more of the qualifications they take.
- Further drive improvements in attendance by working with those pupils and families who have higher rates of absence.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders have led improvements effectively across the school since the previous inspection. Leaders are passionate about the school. They work with great enthusiasm to realise their vision. Other staff and governors share leaders' commitment to the school and its pupils.
- Leaders make sure that the school's curriculum is a real strength. The curriculum has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Pupils have the opportunity to complete a number of GCSE qualifications. These support pupils' successful progression when they leave school. Pupils also follow high-quality vocational qualifications with alternative providers. Pupils' motivation at school is enhanced by these courses. Pupils often use their experience of work-related learning to identify routes into further learning or employment. Leaders make sure that the curriculum is sufficiently flexible to respond to pupils' individual circumstances.
- Senior leaders routinely monitor the impact that staff have in classrooms. Leaders evaluate a range of different aspects of lessons. Leaders' analysis of lessons is used to plan development sessions. These sessions have successfully improved the impact that teaching has on learning.
- Leaders in the school benefit from formal opportunities to develop their leadership skills. Strong links exist between school staff and colleagues through the Birmingham South network of schools.
- Other leaders in school understand their roles and keep a clear focus on supporting pupils and improving their outcomes. They have clear action plans and routinely evaluate the impact of their work. Senior leaders successfully hold these leaders to account and support them in their endeavours.
- Senior leaders hold all staff to account through robust procedures to manage their performance. Staff performance targets are closely aligned with the school's strategic plans and goals. Staff feel well supported in their work and enjoy working at the school.
- Leaders use external support to validate the work they do. Governors commission an external consultant who visits the school. This consultant provides a high degree of support and challenge to leaders in a variety of aspects of the school's provision.
- Leaders have well-thought-out systems to identify pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff use additional funding effectively to meet the specific learning needs of these pupils in lessons. As a result, the progress of these pupils is very similar to other pupils at the school.
- Leaders make effective use of pupil premium funding to support the development of disadvantaged pupils' skills in English and mathematics. Any differences between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and their peers are diminishing over time.
- Pupils' personal, social and health education is promoted well through the challenge day programme. Pupils participate in a range of adventurous experiences through this aspect of the curriculum. Pupils successfully develop wider skills, such as teamwork

and leadership.

- Leaders accurately evaluate how well the school is doing. They use a wide range of objective evidence to support their judgements. Leaders use their knowledge of the school's effectiveness to carefully plan strategic actions. However, leaders' self-evaluation does not include sufficient objective evidence about how well pupils' wider skills are developing or pupils' outcomes in vocational qualifications. Consequently, leaders are less clear about the effect of these aspects of the curriculum on pupils' progress.

Governance of the school

- Governors and trustees are fully involved in the strategic development of the school. They bring a wide range of relevant professional experience to their roles.
- Leaders and governors share a clear sense of purpose for the school. They make sure that leaders of other schools in the Birmingham South network maintain effective links, which benefit staff and pupils.
- Governors fully understand their responsibilities to safeguard pupils at the school. They have a clear understanding of the vulnerabilities that pupils who attend the school may face. Governors effectively hold leaders to account to make sure that pupils' safety and welfare needs are addressed.
- Governors use a wide range of success measures to evaluate the school's effectiveness. They ensure that the information leaders that present is valid, for example, through regular visits to the school. However, governors do not currently evaluate in a formal way how well specific curriculum opportunities support pupils in developing their personal and social skills, or the contribution of alternative provision to pupils' outcomes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders make sure that staff are fully aware of the school's policies and practice to ensure that pupils are safe. Staff are confident that they take appropriate action when necessary. Staff universally feel that pupils are safe when they are at school.
- Leaders make sure that they receive clear information about pupils from their previous school. This helps staff to prepare effectively to meet pupils' needs. As a result, staff are able to support pupils' safety and welfare needs right from the start of their time at the school.
- Governors and leaders make sure that when pupils are working away from the school, for example at alternative provision or on challenge days, their safety remains the utmost priority. Staff responsible for these aspects of the curriculum complete detailed risk assessments. Staff make sure that pupils are prepared to manage any risks or hazards they encounter.
- Pupils receive clear information about a variety of ways to keep themselves safe. Pupils said that they feel safe when they are at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Staff are highly skilled at building and maintaining positive relationships with pupils. This creates an atmosphere in lessons that both supports and challenges pupils to make academic and social progress.
- Staff know their pupils well. They plan lessons that take pupils' academic starting points into account. This is particularly important because pupils start at the school at different times of the year. Staff incorporate opportunities to meet pupils' pastoral and social needs into their lessons.
- Alternative provision tutors have strong relationships with pupils. They use these to good effect. Pupils are actively engaged with and motivated by their work. Tutors ensure that pupils achieve well in both practical and theoretical aspects of vocational courses. Pupils develop employability skills well through these courses.
- Staff have high expectations for pupils. For example, pupils are given opportunities to use the highest-level skills in practical technology. As a result, pupils are able to gain the top-level marks in controlled assessments.
- Pupils often arrive at the school with gaps in their basic skills. Staff identify and take opportunities to effectively promote pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across a range of subjects. Pupils' progress in English and mathematics benefits as a result. However, pupils still find writing at length a challenge, for example when responding to multiple mark exam questions.
- Staff plan lessons to reflect pupils' individual needs and involve them in learning. This has variable success. Some pupils engage less well with their work than others do. Staff recognise and encourage pupils who are particularly motivated and enthusiastic. However, this can disadvantage those pupils who are less engaged because staff do not fully involve them in the lesson.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils speak with pride about their school. They value highly the support and care that staff show them and feel their teachers know them well. Pupils are proud of their achievements and comment positively on the opportunities they have at the school. Parents share this view. One parent said, 'Teachers always go above and beyond to be helpful and positive.'
- Leaders ensure that pupils participate in a wide range of adventurous learning experiences through weekly challenge days. Activities are often new to pupils and include canoeing, mountain biking and climbing. Staff use these opportunities to successfully develop pupils' wider skills, including confidence, decision-making, risk

taking and interpersonal relationships.

- Pupils benefit from clear, impartial careers advice and guidance. School staff ensure that pupils follow action plans. They support pupils with applications and interviews for the next steps in their education or training. As a result, pupils make well-informed choices about their next steps. Pupils talk positively about how the school prepares them for the next stages of their education or training. Almost all pupils successfully move onto college, apprenticeships or employment with training.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' pastoral and behaviour needs are met when they attend alternative provision. Providers share reports of pupils' progress and their conduct with school staff after each session. Leaders use this information to track how well pupils do.
- Staff carefully plan and effectively deliver opportunities to contribute to pupils' personal, social and health education through the curriculum, for example through assemblies. Pupils talk openly and confidently about the issues they explore. Pupils are less clear about how their learning promotes British values, although these values are reflected in their attitudes and behaviours.
- Pupils said that they feel safe at the school. They learn about how to keep themselves safe, for example, from the risks posed by gang culture or knife crime. Pupils commented that incidents of bullying are very rare at the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' conduct in lessons and in social spaces at the school is generally calm. Pupils said that the school environment helps them to concentrate.
- Leaders have established clear systems to manage pupils' behaviour. Extra staff support pupils in lessons when required. They provide opportunities for time out of a lesson if needed. When time out of a lesson is required, staff make sure that pupils return to the classroom as soon as possible. The action that staff take minimises any disruption to other pupils' learning. Pupils are aware of the consequences of their conduct.
- The proportion of pupils excluded from the school for short periods of time was high in the autumn term. This followed the introduction of increased expectations for pupils' conduct. Exclusions have since returned to relatively low levels. No group of pupils is disadvantaged by disproportionately high rates of exclusion.
- Leaders and governors only use permanent exclusions as a last resort and after all other strategies have been exhausted. This is a very rare sanction at the school.
- Pupils' attendance remains below the high targets that leaders and governors have set. Leaders' actions to address low attendance are having some success in engaging pupils more with their learning. Many pupils' attendance at Reach School is much higher than at their previous schools. The few pupils whose attendance remains low miss valuable learning opportunities. This hampers the progress they make.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- When they start at the school, many pupils have not previously made the progress expected of them because of disruptions to their secondary school education. Some have a great deal of ground to make up, particularly in literacy and numeracy skills.
- Staff successfully settle pupils in when they arrive at the school and get them back on track with their learning. As a result, pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. In 2016, 68% of pupils left the school with at least a grade C in GCSE English and mathematics. This compares very favourably to the national average for all pupils. It is not as clear how well pupils are doing in English and mathematics this year. This is due to limited information about the standards required in new assessments in English and mathematics. Pupils attain well in science and technology.
- Leaders' analysis of the school's assessment information shows that Year 10 pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making more progress than other pupils are. In Year 11, these pupils do as well as their peers. This is as a result of highly effective interventions to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress is uneven. At the start of the year, they make slower progress than other pupils do. More recently, disadvantaged pupils' progress has increased. They are now making more progress than other pupils at the school.
- Most-able pupils generally make less progress than other pupils, particularly if they are also disadvantaged. There are small numbers of pupils in this group. This means that it is not possible to identify any patterns with real certainty.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision make good progress and achieve vocational qualifications. These courses develop pupils' employability skills. Pupils often use these experiences as a route into further education or apprenticeships. Tutors' analysis shows that pupils with low attendance are more at risk of not gaining these qualifications.
- Leaders ensure that pupils take as many qualifications as possible. As a result, the proportion of pupils achieving at least five GCSEs has increased. However, the proportion achieving at higher grade GCSEs is low. This is despite pupils' success in English and mathematics.

School details

Unique reference number	139671
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10032615

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	13 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	36 and a further 28 who are dual registered
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Mr D Adams
Headteacher	Miss N Redhead
Telephone number	01216 758989
Website	www.reachscool.co.uk
Email address	nicola.redhead@reachscool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	28– 29 April 2015

Information about this school

- Reach school was established in September 2013. Schools within the Birmingham south network of schools commission places at the school.
- Pupils join the school during either Year 10 or Year 11. The school offers provision for pupils who have been, or who are at risk of, permanent exclusion.
- Three fifths of pupils are eligible for pupil premium funding.
- A very high proportion of pupils who attend the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities, which are supported by the school.
- There are more than twice as many boys as girls at the school.
- Pupils follow a curriculum that includes a range of GCSE and vocational qualifications.
- Leaders extend the school curriculum through alternative provision for most pupils at different times of the week. The main providers are Gordon Franks Training Limited

and Envirohort Limited. A very small number of pupils complete all of their education with alternative providers.

- Most pupils participate in a challenge day each week. Staff from the school organise a range of adventurous activities, including mountain biking and climbing.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in a range of lessons. Some observations were carried out with members of the school's senior leadership team. Lessons covered a range of subjects and both year groups. Inspectors observed an assembly and visited pupils at alternative provision. Inspectors also evaluated pupils' conduct at the start of the day and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors reviewed pupils' work in lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and other leaders, including those responsible for safeguarding, and with two trustees. An inspector met with an external consultant who works with the school.
- Inspectors evaluated the views of members of staff through the 16 responses to the inspection questionnaire and through meetings. Although too few parents completed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, the additional comments that some parents provided during the inspection were evaluated.
- Pupils met formally with inspectors. Inspectors also conducted informal discussions with pupils during lessons and at social times. The 12 responses to the inspection questionnaire for pupils were also taken into account.
- Inspectors reviewed a variety of documentation, including school policies, self-evaluation documents and action plans. Inspectors evaluated information about attendance, behaviour, outcomes and teaching and learning.

Inspection team

Rob Hackfath, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sarah Ashley

Ofsted Inspector

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