

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



5 April 2019

Bobbie Kelly
Headteacher
The CE Academy
Cromwell Campus
Poole Street
Northampton
Northamptonshire
NN1 3EX

Dear Ms Kelly,

Short inspection of The CE Academy

Following my visit to the school on 26 March 2019 with Janis Warren, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be outstanding in December 2016.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You distribute leadership very effectively across the eight campuses in the academy. This ensures that all pupils benefit from the highly personalised and consistent approaches used.

Key to the academy's success are the excellent relationships between pupils and staff, and the in-depth knowledge of every individual. From when they start, pupils grow in confidence due to encouragement and positive feedback from staff. The academy's campuses are bright and well maintained, with pupils' work prominently displayed and celebrated. This creates a positive climate for learning.

Leaders are committed to teaching all the subjects of the national curriculum to enable pupils to achieve the best possible outcomes at GCSE. Flexible options are also provided, tailored to pupils' individual needs and interests.

Pupils who leave the school at the end of key stage 4 achieve better GCSEs overall than pupils in other alternative provisions. On leaving the academy, most pupils move on to college placements, apprenticeships, jobs with training or other training.

A significant number of pupils are successfully reintegrated into mainstream schools during key stage 3. Some, with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are found appropriate placements in specialist provisions, following statutory assessment.

Staff manage the behaviour of pupils extremely well. Lessons are highly structured, and the strong relationships minimise any misbehaviour. Staff encourage pupils to take responsibility for their actions. They are taught about the consequences of poor behaviour in real-life situations. This prepares pupils well for adult life.

Parents and carers are very supportive of the academy. A typical comment was, 'My child had a new lease of life and is enjoying learning since joining the school.' Pupils also talked movingly about the impact of positive feedback from the school on their self-esteem and family relationships.

At the previous inspection, inspectors asked senior leaders and governors to monitor more effectively the impact of their work to support pupils' behaviour. This is an area you have addressed well and is now a strong aspect of your work. Leaders have a proactive approach to behaviour and monitor it closely. Pupils have targets for behaviour, which are reviewed alongside academic progress at half-termly review meetings. Also, crisis prevention plans are drawn up, with pupils' involvement, to help them deal with situations they find difficult. These plans are discussed at daily debrief sessions so actions can be properly implemented. The impact of this work is that there are no exclusions and few serious incidents. However, some pupils occasionally need a tailored, one-to-one curriculum, to help them address social, emotional and mental-health issues.

Safeguarding is effective

Arrangements and procedures for safeguarding are robust and fit for purpose, because they are shared by all staff. Each member of staff is a key tutor for several pupils. Key tutors have a very close knowledge of the issues affecting pupils and they give regular updates, by phone, to parents. Also, there are debriefing sessions at the end of every day, on each campus, where individual pupils are discussed, so any concerns can be identified and addressed promptly. One alternative provider for the academy feeds back any issues from their sessions in time for the daily debrief sessions, so all concerns are kept up to date. These procedures are further strengthened by half-termly campus meetings to update any safeguarding issues further.

Concerns about pupils are recorded on 'lilac' forms and are followed up quickly so appropriate action is taken to keep pupils safe. Safeguarding procedures and records are closely monitored by the designated safeguarding lead, who is supported by the other members of the leadership team who act as deputy safeguarding leads.

The academy works well to support vulnerable young people and operates in a challenging local context, responding to issues around drugs and gang culture. Inspectors looked at case studies where academy staff worked closely with families, police and early help services. This has led to successes, with pupils previously influenced by gangs improving their attendance at school and ultimately achieving well in GCSE examinations.

The academy works effectively with external agencies to keep pupils safe, including social care, the community safety engagement team and virtual schools services for three local authorities in supporting looked after children.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and are taught how to be safe outside school through personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons and informal discussions.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, inspectors focused on: what leaders are doing to improve attendance; how effectively the academy engages parents in their children's learning; and how well leaders ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils to enable them to achieve outstanding progress.
- Staff communicate well with parents, contacting them immediately when there are any concerns. Postcards are regularly sent home with positive comments from staff about pupils' achievements and good behaviour. Pupils spoke with inspectors with pride about how they valued these postcards.
- The academy works closely with parents to address issues at home which affect pupils' attendance and achievement. Termly meetings are held with parents to review their child's progress. These often take place in the home because they are convenient for parents to attend. Key tutors arrange early-help assessments. The school liaises effectively with the police to support pupils who may be influenced by gangs.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils. Its purpose is to prepare pupils for their next placement, either in another school, in college, in employment or in training. The curriculum has a clear academic focus, which gives pupils the opportunity to achieve GCSEs, NVQs and City & Guilds qualifications. The knowledge and skills pupils learn in core subjects are applied through cross-curricular learning in areas such as cookery, art and PSHE. Also, the teaching of British values and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are interwoven throughout all the subjects. This adds breath and balance to the curriculum offered.
- The coordinator of the provision for pupils with SEND (SENCo) ensures that the curriculum is fully inclusive for pupils with SEND. Assessments are conducted to evaluate how lessons should meet the different needs of pupils or whether a statutory assessment for an education, health and care plan is required. Effective arrangements are made for around one-third of the pupils in the academy who sit GCSE exams but may need extra time, a reader or a scribe.
- A strong emphasis is placed on improving pupils' communication skills, to give them a 'script' for handling contentious situations with their peers or to prepare them for discussions with potential future employers at job interviews.
- The academy provides a range of vocational experiences, such as hair and beauty, catering and working with horses. Some options, such as equine therapy and outdoor activities, also address the personal, social, and mental-health needs of pupils, as well as teaching them valuable life skills. Pupils work towards

recognised accredited qualifications when placed with alternative providers. The academy also provides work experience placements, but leaders acknowledge that sometimes it is difficult to find enough appropriate placements for pupils.

- Evidence from lesson observations and work analysis shows the quality of teaching to be strong in all subjects. Teachers are subject specialists with strong subject knowledge and teach across all the academy campuses. Continuity of support is provided for pupils by teaching assistants who work on the same campus each day.
- Although pupils' attendance is below the national average for mainstream secondary schools, it is higher than that in other alternative provisions. The academy has strong systems in place for managing and improving the attendance of those pupils who do not attend school regularly. Follow-up phone calls are made, and warning letters are sent home. If this is not effective, meetings are held with an attendance welfare advisor, who is employed by the school, at which time attendance targets are agreed. Occasionally, parents are prosecuted for pupils' persistently low attendance. This has resulted in improvements in attendance for those pupils concerned.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they explore appropriate work-experience placements for pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and chair of the board of trustees, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Julian Scholefield
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

- The inspectors had discussions with you and other senior and middle leaders, the chair of the governing body and the trust board and two other governors, a range of teachers and teaching assistants, representatives from two alternative providers and several pupils.
- There were 10 responses from parents on Parent View.
- Lessons were observed in all year groups and across seven of the eight campuses, some of which were jointly observed with you and another senior leader.
- Inspectors sampled work in a range of subjects and observed behaviour around the academy. We considered responses to surveys from staff, parents and pupils.

- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of school documentation provided by leaders, including that relating to behaviour, safeguarding, governance, self-evaluation and school improvement.