

Inspection of Thorns Collegiate Academy

Stockwell Avenue, Quarry Bank, Brierley Hill, West Midlands DY5 2NU

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 February 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have not made sure that pupils at this school receive an acceptable quality of education. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. In some subjects, teachers do not match work to pupils' needs. Pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), make poor progress.

Leaders do not carry out sufficient checks to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils are safe, or that they receive the support they need to keep them as safe as possible. Too many pupils, including those with SEND, are absent from school too often, and this affects their learning.

Leaders have developed a broad curriculum that supports pupils' wider development. Leaders aim for pupils to develop an understanding of belonging and self-esteem through the schools' 'literacy for life' curriculum. However, there is still work to be done to make sure the planned curriculum matches leaders' ambitions.

The majority of pupils form strong relationships with most of their teachers. They know who to speak to if they have a concern. Pupils say that when bullying happens, staff deal with this quickly and effectively. Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school site. However, some teachers do not consistently challenge behaviour that disrupts pupils' learning.

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

Leaders have not made sure that all pupils receive an acceptable quality of education. Leaders have not checked that pupils with SEND receive the support they need. They have not made sure that education, health and care plans (EHC plan) are regularly reviewed. Consequently, the changes in pupils' needs have not been properly considered. Additionally, information about these pupils is not always shared with the staff who need it. Pupils with an EHC plan make poor progress.

In some subjects, the curriculum is well planned. Leaders have considered the important things that pupils need to know and remember. They have made sure that new learning builds upon the things pupils already know. For example, in modern foreign languages, pupils develop a sound understanding of phonics, before learning about the past, present and imperfect tense. In some subjects, teachers check pupils' learning to ensure that they have understood what they have been taught. For example, in English, teachers are quick to identify gaps in pupils' learning and adjust their teaching appropriately to fill these gaps. However, in some subjects, teachers do not use assessment well. The school's assessment procedures do not help teachers to identify pupils' gaps in learning. Consequently, new learning does not build upon the things pupils already know. When this happens, pupils struggle to remember what they have been taught.

Leaders have planned a broad curriculum that extends beyond the academic. Some pupils benefit from a range of experiences away from the classroom, such as visits to the national space centre and extra-curricular clubs, including The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. However, not enough pupils take part in these activities. Pupils receive appropriate information about the world of work. Leaders are beginning to develop a culture of reading. They make sure that pupils have the opportunity to read each day. Leaders' work to support pupils who struggle to read is developing.

Pupils and staff say that behaviour in lessons and around the school is improving. In the majority of lessons, pupils behave well and focus on their learning. However, this is not always the case. On occasion, some pupils talk over teachers and disrupt the learning of others. Some teachers do not challenge this when it happens. Leaders have introduced a new behaviour system that is starting to have a positive impact. When pupils misbehave, staff work closely with them to improve their behaviour. This is beginning to help those pupils who need it to manage their behaviour and reduce incidents of challenging behaviour.

Too many pupils, particularly those with an EHC plan, miss too much school. This leads to gaps in their knowledge. Leaders have not done enough to make sure that these pupils attend school as often as they should. Leaders have systems in place to address poor attendance, but these are yet to demonstrate impact.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The school's and trust's systems to check the effectiveness of safeguarding are not robust. While staff have received appropriate safeguarding training, some do not follow the safeguarding processes that are in place. This puts pupils at risk of harm. Leaders have not taken the necessary steps to ensure that all staff know, and follow, the school's safeguarding procedures so that pupils are kept as safe as possible.

Leaders do not check that pupils educated at other schools or those with poor attendance are kept safe. Attendance officers do not know who the vulnerable pupils are and the significance of their absence. Record-keeping is weak.

Pupils say they feel safe. They are taught to keep themselves safe in a range of situations.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Safeguarding procedures are not robust. This means that some pupils, especially the most vulnerable, are at risk of harm. This is because leaders do not carry out sufficient checks on their well-being. Leaders should urgently fulfil their responsibility to safeguard all pupils, including those in alternative provision. They

need to ensure that safeguarding procedures are implemented consistently across the school to keep pupils as safe as possible.

- Leaders have not ensured that pupils with SEND receive the support they need to achieve well. As a result, provision for these pupils is weak. Leaders should ensure that all EHC plans are updated regularly and that teachers are provided with the information they need to enable them to adapt the curriculum to meet pupils' needs and enable them to achieve well.
- Senior leaders do not check carefully enough on the implementation and impact of their work. This means that they are unable to take effective action to address the most important areas needing improvement. Leaders should ensure that regular checks are carried out to monitor the effectiveness and impact of their work.
- Some teachers do not use assessment well to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. As a result, pupils do not always have the prior knowledge required to make sense of the things they are being taught. Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment effectively to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge, in order to adapt the curriculum to make sure new learning builds upon what pupils already know.
- Pupils' absence rates have been too high for too long. Pupils, particularly those with an EHC plan, miss too much school. This affects the progress they make. Leaders need to work closely with parents and external agencies to instil the importance of regular attendance, especially for pupils with high-level needs.

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.

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	143818
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10212199
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	884
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ashley Savell-Boss
Principal	Manny Kelay
Website	www.thornsca.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 November 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school meets 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.
- The school uses full-time alternative provision for a small number of pupils at two registered providers.
- This school is one of 10 schools that comprise the Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the principal and other senior leaders. Meetings were held with curriculum leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. Inspectors also met with a range of other staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, modern foreign languages, music and history. 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.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of safeguarding information, including the school's safeguarding policy, spoke to staff and pupils about safeguarding and looked at how pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. The lead inspector spoke to the safeguarding lead about the reporting and recording of any safeguarding incidents.
- Inspectors took account of the parent 'free-text' comments and the responses on Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered the responses to the pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

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