

Inspection of Kickstart Academy

11 Tan Bank, Wellington, Telford, Shropshire TF1 1HJ

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Respectful relationships are evident throughout this school. Staff treat pupils with respect, and pupils respond by showing respect to adults and each other. Staff provide excellent pastoral care. They form a highly committed and hard-working team. Pupils trust staff to support them, especially when they are experiencing difficulties.

Pupils usually behave well. Staff manage incidents of inappropriate behaviour effectively. Bullying is not tolerated. Pupils know that staff will take incidents seriously and they trust staff to resolve them.

Academic expectations are high. Pupils study an appropriate range of subjects and can achieve several qualifications. However, the curriculum remains a work in progress. It is constrained by the school building. Some aspects of the curriculum and how it is taught are less effective than they need to be.

The school encourages all pupils to attend regularly. Many do. Staff work hard to support the minority of pupils and families of pupils who do not attend regularly enough.

Most pupils enjoy school. Their attitudes to learning improve over time. Staff provide excellent careers advice and guidance. Almost all pupils move on to further education or apprenticeships when they leave the school.

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

The school has improved since it was last inspected in 2018. Pupils now study a broader range of subjects and are able to achieve a number of GCSE qualifications. Pupils' behaviour has improved, and they generally engage well in learning. These improvements have been achieved despite challenging circumstances. These include the COVID-19 pandemic and a school building that is too small to accommodate all pupils at any one time.

The governing body provides clear strategic direction. Governors know the school well. They provide highly effective support and challenge to leaders. The multi-academy trust (MAT) that is supporting the school provides excellent support. For example, it has provided the school's new headteacher. The school's staff are committed to providing the best possible education for pupils. Their hard work has been instrumental in the school's improvement.

All pupils study an appropriate set of core subjects. These are well planned to help pupils' learning build over time. They are taught effectively. However, there remains some variability in how well the core curriculum is delivered. For example, teachers do not consistently use the most appropriate teaching methods to help pupils learn.

Teachers do not always identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge, for example when pupils have been absent.

The academic core is supplemented by a range of practical or vocational subjects, including fishing, cooking and boxing. These are taught off site. All engage some pupils well. However, the effectiveness of these subjects is also variable. Some pupils do not engage well with some of them.

Leaders have not checked on how well the curriculum is being put into practice as well as they might. They provide effective training for staff in many areas, including safeguarding and managing behaviour, but teachers have had to source their own subject-specific training. Although they have done this effectively, they do not receive high-quality, subject-specific guidance.

Most pupils are proficient readers and staff encourage pupils to read. Strategies to support pupils who find reading more difficult are appropriate, but at an early stage of implementation. It is too soon to judge their impact.

The quality of the school's work to promote pupils' personal development is mixed. It has several strengths. These include careers education. Pupils have weekly employability lessons. They receive independent careers guidance. They undertake college 'taster' courses and work placements. Pupils take practical qualifications in, for example, food hygiene and first aid. They are prepared well for life after school. Pupils are taught well about the rule of law. Their moral development is promoted strongly.

Other aspects of personal development are weaker. Pupils do not learn enough about this country's democratic process and why it is important. The curriculum does not contain enough content to help pupils understand the different cultures and religions that make up modern Britain.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of support and care throughout the school. Staff know the signs that pupils need extra help because they are regularly trained and reminded. They pass on concerns to leaders, who deal with them appropriately. Leaders work well with external services to ensure that pupils get the right support.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. Leaders are aware of the particular risks that the school's pupils might face, and they adapt the curriculum using this knowledge. For example, pupils are taught about issues such as gang violence and knife crime. They learn about healthy relationships and the importance of consent.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders do not check on the quality of all aspects of curriculum implementation sufficiently. They are not aware of where some weaknesses lie, and they do not ensure that teachers receive high-quality, subject-specific training to improve implementation. Consequently, the implementation of both the academic and the practical/vocational curriculum vary in quality. Leaders should:
 - systematically check how well all aspects of the curriculum are being delivered and identify where support and/or training is needed
 - ensure that all teachers receive appropriate subject-specific training.
- The curriculum does not contain sufficient content about aspects of fundamental British values. Consequently, pupils are not taught enough about, for example, the importance of the democratic process or about the different cultures and religions that make up modern Britain. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum covers all aspects of fundamental British values in sufficient detail.

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	142085
Local authority	Telford & Wrekin
Inspection number	10211760
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	14 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	38
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Rosie Beswick
Headteacher	Emma Rennie-Gibbons
Website	www.telfordcollege.ac.uk/kickstart-academy-pru/
Date of previous inspection	1 and 2 May 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been three changes of headteacher since the school was last inspected. The current headteacher joined the school in February 2022.
- The school moved to its current premises in March 2020.
- The school currently uses three unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause. This means that pupils receive information about the full range of education and training options open to them. This includes opportunities for a range of education and training providers to speak to pupils about technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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 headteacher and other leaders. They met with six trustees, including the chair of the trust board, and with the executive headteacher of the MAT that is supporting the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, art, and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered safeguarding by meeting with the designated safeguarding lead and the headteacher, scrutinising policies and records relating to child protection and examining the safeguarding checks made on staff before they join the school.
- Inspectors visited one of the alternative providers that the school uses and held a telephone call with another.
- Inspectors considered responses from staff to their online inspection questionnaire.
- Inspectors spoke informally with pupils at breaktime and lunchtime. They observed the school at these times. They met more formally with two groups of pupils.

Inspection team

Alun Williams, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Amjid Zaman

Ofsted Inspector

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