

Inspection of Pool Hayes Academy

Castle Drive, Willenhall, West Midlands WV12 4QZ

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 April 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a calm and caring school. Pupils, including those in the sixth form, are happy here. They enjoy coming to school and attend regularly. Pupils are safe. Teachers take time to get to know each pupil well. Pupils build strong, positive relationships with their teachers. They know whom to turn to if they have a concern. Pupils are confident that when bullying happens, staff will deal with it swiftly and effectively.

Pupils, parents and staff told inspectors that behaviour at the school is much improved. Inspectors agree. In lessons, pupils behave well and focus on their learning. Teachers are quick to challenge pupils when they fail to meet the high expectations leaders have of them. The school's values are clear to see. Pupils are resilient to setbacks and strive to achieve their best.

Leaders are developing an ambitious curriculum that puts pupils' personal development at its heart. Through the school's '18 by 18' programme, pupils have the opportunity to read a wide range of books, such as 'To Kill a Mockingbird', 'Adventures of Huckleberry Finn' and 'Animal Farm'. Chosen by pupils, these texts help to develop understanding of important societal issues, such as diversity, prejudice and individual liberties. Pupils value this.

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

The principal, supported by the multi-academy trust, has overseen a period of rapid improvement at the school. Leaders are creating a culture of excellence and self-improvement. Staff's professional development is prioritised. Many teachers are experts in their subject; they understand how best to support pupils to learn. Consequently, pupils enjoy their lessons and behave well. Staff describe the recent changes at the school as 'transformational'.

Leaders have carefully considered the precise knowledge that pupils need to know to be successful in most subjects. Where this happens, the things that pupils learn build effectively upon what they already know. Consequently, pupils remember what they have been taught, and they make strong progress. For example, in mathematics, pupils approach challenging concepts such as algebraic fractions with confidence. Leaders have not identified the small steps that pupils need to learn to be successful in a few subjects. As a result, the new things pupils learn do not always build upon what they already know. This is a barrier to their learning.

Teachers' use assessment well where the curriculum is planned well. In most lessons, including in the sixth form, teachers check learning to make sure that pupils have understood everything they have been taught. Teachers quickly adjust their teaching to fill any gaps in pupils' knowledge. This stops pupils from falling behind. Teachers do not use assessment as effectively in a few lessons. They do not always identify gaps in pupils' knowledge quickly enough. When gaps are identified, some teachers do not use this information consistently well to adapt their plans.

Consequently, gaps in pupils' knowledge, and misconceptions, persist. This hinders pupils' learning.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They make sure that all staff have the information they need to best support these pupils. Teachers use this information well. They adapt their teaching skilfully, to ensure all pupils can access the challenging work given to them. Because of this, pupils with SEND make strong progress. Pupils, including those in the sixth form, read often. Leaders are making sure there are an increasing number of opportunities in the curriculum to support this. This is helping pupils to develop a love of reading. Pupils who struggle to read as well as their peers receive support to develop their phonics knowledge. This work is having a positive impact.

Pupils behave well in lessons. Teachers deal with any disruption to learning swiftly. Because of this, minimal learning time is lost. Leaders spend time with pupils to help them to understand why and how their behaviour needs to improve, when needed. This work is having a positive impact on the culture of the school. There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils and sixth-form students to develop their passions outside of the classroom. For instance, pupils can attend a range of sports clubs, such as table basketball and athletics clubs, as well as an eco club and a samba drumming group. Pupils are also involved in theatrical productions, such as 'Matilda'. Pupils value these experiences, and a growing number of pupils take part in them. Leaders have made sure that all pupils receive high-quality information about the world of work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders take safeguarding seriously. Staff receive ongoing, effective training to help them recognise pupils who are at risk of harm. Because of this, staff act quickly if they have a concern, no matter how small. Leaders are resolute. They follow through all concerns raised and make sure that pupils receive the support they need to stay as safe as possible.

Leaders understand the risk to pupils in their community. They use this knowledge to good effect, adapting their curriculum to make sure pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe from harm in a variety of situations, such as online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not considered carefully enough the precise knowledge that pupils need to learn in a small number of subjects. As a result, pupils are not always taught the important things they need to be successful. This means that pupils do not progress as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that curriculum planning is equally well developed across all subjects to enable all pupils to make strong progress.
- Teachers do not use assessment well enough to check pupils have understood what has been taught in a small number of subjects. This means that, on occasion, teachers do not identify gaps in pupils' knowledge before moving on. Sometimes, even when gaps are identified, teachers do not address them quickly enough. This holds pupils back. Leaders need to ensure that all teachers use assessment consistently well to check pupils' understanding and use this information to adapt their teaching and curriculum planning where necessary.

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	142594
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10227522
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1060
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	93
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Pat Beanland OBE
Principal	Tom McDowall
Website	www.poolhayes.attrust.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 January 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause. This means that pupils in Years 8 to 13 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.
- The school uses full-time alternative provision for a small number of pupils at four registered providers.
- This school is one of 21 schools that comprise the Academy Transformation Trust.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors 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.
- Inspectors met with the principal and other senior leaders, including from across the multi-academy trust. Meetings were held with curriculum leaders and the SEND coordinator. Inspectors also met with a range of other staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, modern foreign languages, science and mathematics. 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 to keep themselves safe. The lead inspector spoke to the safeguarding leader about the reporting and recording of any safeguarding incidents.
- Inspectors took account of parents' 'free-text' comments and the responses to Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered the responses to the pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Alexander Laney, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mel Ford	Her Majesty's Inspector
Gwen Onyon	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Epton	Ofsted Inspector

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