

Inspection of a good school: The de Ferrers Academy

St Mary's Drive, Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire DE13 0LL

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 May 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and safe here. Leaders care deeply about pupils' well-being. They make sure that staff know pupils well. As a result, most pupils have strong relationships with teachers, and know whom to turn to should they have a concern. Pupils say that if bullying happens, teachers will help to resolve the issue.

Leaders actively promote pupils' wider personal development. All pupils have access to an impressive range of opportunities to develop their interests and talents. For example, many pupils, including students in the sixth form, take part in the Combined Cadet Force or Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme programmes. Pupils enjoy these experiences.

Leaders have high expectations. They are ambitious for pupils. Leaders expect pupils to be kind, work hard, and make wise choices. Most pupils behave well in lessons. However, a small number of pupils do not always behave as well as they should. When this happens, lessons can be disrupted and learning time is lost. Leaders have not ensured that all staff share their ambitious vision or have high enough expectations of what pupils can do. In some lessons, teachers do not routinely give pupils work that helps them to progress.

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

Leaders are ambitious for the school and the community they serve. The principal has taken decisive action despite the COVID-19 pandemic to bring about improvements. For example, leaders have developed a curriculum for pupils who need extra support. This provision provides a safe and inclusive environment for these pupils. This work is having a positive impact.

Leaders have prioritised pupils' personal development. They are rightly proud of this work. There are many opportunities for pupils to pursue their passions outside the classroom. Leaders have made sure that all pupils have access to these. For example, pupils, including students in the sixth form, regularly attend clubs such as those for creative writing, for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT+) issues, and debating. These experiences help pupils to develop their understanding of important issues such as diversity. Pupils can also take part in a range of sports clubs, such as for cricket and badminton. They value these opportunities. All pupils receive appropriate information about the world of work.

The curriculum is well planned in some subjects. Leaders have identified the important things that pupils need to know. They have carefully sequenced this to make sure that the new knowledge builds on prior learning. Where this happens, pupils make strong progress through the curriculum. For example, in mathematics, pupils have a solid understanding of the underlying principles needed to make sense of trigonometry. However, leaders have not identified the small steps that pupils need to learn to be successful in most subjects. Because of this, teachers are sometimes unclear about precisely what to teach and when. When this happens, pupils struggle to remember what they have been taught.

Teachers use assessment well to identify the gaps in pupils' knowledge in some lessons. They adapt their teaching to make sure that pupils remember the important things they ought to. However, too often, teachers do not use assessment as effectively. They do not always check that pupils have understood what has been taught. This leads to gaps in what pupils need to know. When gaps are identified, leaders do not make sure that all teachers use this information consistently well to adapt their teaching. Consequently, gaps in pupils' knowledge are not closed quickly enough. This hinders pupils' learning.

Leaders know pupils' needs well. Parents and carers agree. Leaders work closely with families and external agencies to make sure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive interventions. Leaders make sure that teachers are well informed about the needs of pupils with SEND. However, too often, the work given to pupils is not matched to their needs. Teachers' expectations of what these pupils can do are sometimes too low. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they could. In all year groups, some pupils struggle to read. These pupils do not always get the support they need to help them to read as well as their peers.

Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school site. They are polite and courteous. However, a minority of pupils do not always meet the high expectations that leaders have of them. When this happens, learning is disrupted. Not all teachers address this effectively. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that safeguarding is of the highest priority for staff across the school's three sites. Leaders forge strong links with the local police to provide ongoing training for

staff. Staff are vigilant, and act quickly regarding concerns. Leaders are resolute, and they follow through all concerns raised. They make sure that pupils receive the support they need to stay as safe as possible.

Leaders are acutely aware of the risks to pupils in the community. They use this knowledge well. They make sure that pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe from harm in a variety of situations, such as when 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 some subjects. Where this happens, pupils are not always taught the important things that they need in order to be successful, and new learning fails to build on what has been taught before. Pupils do not remember concepts well enough to apply in later learning. Leaders should ensure that curriculum planning identifies the precise knowledge that pupils need to learn in all subjects.
- Teachers do not use assessment well enough to check that pupils have understood what has been taught across the school. They do not identify gaps in pupils' knowledge before moving on. 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 adapt their teaching and curriculum planning where necessary.
- Leaders do not make sure that teachers routinely adapt their teaching well enough to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Consequently, some teachers do not give pupils work that is matched to their needs. This limits how well these pupils can access their learning. Leaders should ensure that all teachers provide work that is well suited to the needs of pupils with SEND.
- Leaders' plans to support pupils who are at an early stage of reading are embryonic. Consequently, some pupils do not learn to read as well as they should and struggle to access the curriculum. Leaders should accelerate their work to ensure that pupils get the help and support they need to improve their reading.
- Some staff do not have sufficiently high expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct. This means that poor behaviour is not challenged consistently. Leaders should ensure that staff understand and apply consistently their expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or

lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2017.

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	136414
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10226922
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	2,387
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	467
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Claire Shaw
Principal	Mrs Kathryn Hardy
Website	www.deferrers.com
Date of previous inspection	24 January 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is one of seven schools that comprise the de Ferrers Trust.
- The school uses part-time alternative provision for a small number of pupils at two registered providers, as well as two other providers.
- 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.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school had 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, 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: mathematics, geography and physical education. 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. They spoke to staff and pupils about safeguarding and looked at how pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. The lead inspector spoke to the designated safeguarding leads about the reporting and recording of any safeguarding incidents.
- Inspectors took account of responses and comments on Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered the responses to the pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Alexander Laney, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Bianka Zemke

Her Majesty's Inspector

Steve Byatt

Ofsted Inspector

Tim Bassett

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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