

Inspection of a good school: Grace Academy Solihull

Chapelhouse Road, Chelmsley Wood, Birmingham, West Midlands B37 5JS

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 May 2022

Outcome

Grace Academy Solihull continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders at Grace Academy Solihull put pupils at the heart of everything they do. Pupils say that staff value them and notice when they need help. Staff have high expectations of pupils, and pupils work hard to meet these expectations. Pupils say that staff respond quickly if any bullying occurs. Pupils welcome the pastoral support they receive and say they feel safe.

Pupils take on leadership roles in all aspects of school life. All students in the sixth form take part in paired reading to improve pupils' reading in Years 7 and 8. They are proud of the work they do to help. 'Pupil ambassadors' support the school environment, well-being, careers, anti-bullying and enrichment. Pupils identify the enrichment activities that they would like. As a result, there is an extensive and popular range of clubs provided, including sewing, cooking, bike maintenance, performing arts and sports. Pupils feel listened to and valued.

Leaders understand the needs of their community. They provide a range of support for parents, such as mental health workshops and parenting support. The daily breakfast club is well attended. Leaders ensured that this continued during the national lockdown and provided breakfast each day from community sites.

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

In most subjects, the curriculum is well planned and well sequenced. Leaders have thought about the important information that pupils need to learn in these subjects. Leaders have organised the curriculum so that pupils can build on their prior knowledge. This helps pupils learn well. The curriculum is not as well planned in other cases. In these subjects, pupils find it difficult to remember what they have learned previously and so they do not make as good progress. Leaders are aware of this and have taken steps to address it. In some cases, this work has been hindered by the pandemic.

Leaders have identified important curriculum knowledge as 'core questions' for each subject. Sometimes, these are used to good effect. For example, pupils can discuss the concept of 'empire' and how this contributes to key historical events in history. Leaders have not identified the most important things that pupils need to know and remember in some other subjects, and this stops pupils from doing well.

Most teachers have good subject knowledge and use the school's approach to teaching consistently. These routines help to support pupils' learning. At times, learning does not provide pupils the opportunity to be independent in their work. This is also the case for students in the sixth form. This hampers them from making useful links between their learning. Pupils say that they enjoy learning. They have confidence that they will achieve well, and they produce good-quality work. Leaders identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) quickly. They provide useful information and training to all staff about the needs of individual pupils, which are used effectively. Pupils with SEND achieve well.

The number of pupils who are taking qualifications that make up the English baccalaureate is low. Leaders are aware of, and are taking appropriate steps to address, this.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Leaders have responded to the historically high levels of suspensions and have introduced the Assisted Recovery Centre. This supports pupils who need extra help to behave well. The number of pupils who are suspended from school has reduced, but leaders know there is still more work to do.

Careers education is a strength. Leaders ensure that all pupils have extensive knowledge about the opportunities they have when they leave school. Pupil Careers Leaders are trained to support their peers find out about colleges, universities and jobs. Leaders have made strong links with local and national employers who come into the school to deliver mock interviews, workshops and assemblies.

Leaders consider the views of staff when they want to introduce new ideas. In turn, staff feel well-supported by leaders. Governors and trust leaders know the school well. They ask the right questions to hold leaders to account and to make sure that pupils learn well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding leaders are well-qualified and knowledgeable about the risks that pupils face. They make sure that pupils understand how to keep themselves safe. They encourage pupils to report their concerns and have introduced posters and pupil ambassadors to support pupils to do so.

Staff receive comprehensive training about safeguarding, and they welcome the opportunities they have to develop expertise in this area. Staff report their concerns appropriately. They say the school mantra is 'if you can't rule it out, rule it in'. Leaders are

tenacious about escalating and challenging the referrals they make to other agencies, to make sure that pupils receive the help they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Most subjects are well-planned and well-sequenced. Pupils do not achieve well in the subjects which are not. Leaders should make sure that the curriculum for all subjects allows pupils to build on their knowledge systematically by following a well-ordered curriculum.
- Pupils are not encouraged to apply their knowledge without support and scaffolding from teachers at times. This limits their ability to develop subject fluency. Leaders should make sure that all pupils have the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills independently of the teacher.

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 as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 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	129342
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	10226971
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	903
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	65
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Christopher Watts
Principal	Darren Gelder
Website	http://solihull.graceacademy.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	28 and 29 March 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is part of the Tove Learning Trust.
- 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 two registered alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- This is 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.
- During the inspection, inspectors held discussions with the headteacher and other senior and middle leaders, including curriculum leaders and the special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors held discussions with teachers and representatives of the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, art and geography. For each of these subjects, 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 met with members of staff individually and in groups. They spoke to pupils at various times during the inspection. Inspectors took account of the responses to the pupils' and staff's surveys, as well as Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors looked at records relating to behaviour, bullying, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding arrangements by checking the school's approach to staff recruitment, scrutinising policy documents and meeting with the designated safeguarding lead.

Inspection team

Claire Price, lead inspector

Lois Kelly

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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