

Inspection of The Sky Academy

Pickeridge Close, Taunton, Somerset TA2 7HW

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 May 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils do not receive an acceptable standard of education. Although new leaders have started to tackle the very significant weaknesses of Sky Academy, it is too early to see any impact. Leaders have recently clarified the structure of the curriculum. They have changed the organisation of the upper school. However, these changes have yet to ensure that pupils develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. Pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities are not being met.

Too many pupils do not engage in lessons. Some behave very poorly. Leaders and staff say behaviour is now better than it was. However, expectations remain low. Staff do not consistently challenge low-level disruption and pupils' lack of engagement in lessons. This impacts negatively on pupils' learning. On occasions, it means that pupils' behaviour gets worse. They become aggressive and disrupt the learning of others. Pupils' attendance has been consistently low over a period of time.

Most pupils are happy and feel that staff understand them. They feel safe and they appreciate the activities they do. Staff take bullying seriously. Pupils feel that any problems will be sorted out.

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

Current leaders recognised that the curriculum in place, particularly in the upper school, did not meet pupils' needs. Over time, pupils have not built up their knowledge and skills well enough. The subject curriculums, particularly in English and mathematics, are not adapted sufficiently to meet the needs of pupils. There remain significant inconsistencies between the education provided for pupils in the lower and upper schools and between classes. There is a lack of clear approaches throughout the school to develop, for example, pupils' reading, speaking and listening and writing. This means that pupils do not systematically develop the basic skills they need for the next stage of their education or employment. Leaders have made changes to the curriculum, but it is very early days.

Some teachers do not have the subject or teaching knowledge they need. They do not ensure that classrooms, equipment and resources support pupils to learn the intended curriculum. Teachers do not use assessment effectively so that they build on what pupils know already. They frequently fail to take into account pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plans).

Staff are clear that there have been significant changes at Sky Academy recently. They say that before, staff's morale was very low, the school was 'broken' and behaviour was 'out of control'. Staff are positive about the new leadership team. They are now working as a team who want to do the best for pupils.

While these changes are positive, pupils are still not learning well enough. Their needs are not met. Many of the leaders are very new. They have not had time to

put in place the improvements needed or to check the impact of recent changes. Those responsible for governance were slow to stop the decline of the school. They still do not have the necessary structures or capacity to ensure that the recent improvements are sustained.

There are some stronger curriculum areas. In subjects such as physical education (PE), pupils achieve well because teachers provide a well-structured curriculum that matches the needs of pupils.

Current leaders have taken steps to improve behaviour. They have appointed specialist staff and check behaviour much more carefully. However, expectations and approaches across the school are unclear. This means that staff do not deal with poor behaviour and lack of engagement consistently. The school does not support pupils with challenging behaviour effectively. Attendance has been very low for some considerable time. Systems to challenge and support families are now in place, but the impact has yet to be seen.

Pupils say they like the school. They recognise the care that staff give them. There are a wide variety of activities available to engage pupils. Staff, for example, use outdoor education and forest school to build teamwork and resilience. There is a clear careers programme in place. 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.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have placed a high priority on strengthening the safeguarding practice in the school. Staff are well trained and are clear about what they must do if they are concerned. Individual cases are closely monitored by staff and actions are followed up. Leaders work closely with external agencies when required.

Leaders know about potential safeguarding risks. They make sure these are covered in the curriculum, assemblies or targeted events.

The school has appropriate systems for checking and vetting new members of staff.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Over time, those responsible for governance have not held leaders to account for the quality of education provided by the school. This means that pupils are not receiving an acceptable standard of education. Leaders and those responsible for governance must ensure that the current changes lead to significant and

sustained improvements in the quality of education, behaviour and attendance for all pupils.

- Leaders have not ensured there is a well-sequenced curriculum in place. Pupils do not gain the knowledge and skills they need across all subjects. Leaders need to design ambitious and well-sequenced subject curriculums across the school. They must ensure that staff are well trained and supported to deliver the curriculum.
- Staff do not use the information in pupils' EHC plans well enough. This means that pupils' needs are not met. Leaders need to ensure that identified needs are clearly understood and the provision to meet these needs is consistently in place and monitored to ensure that pupils are making progress.
- In too many lessons, pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are poor. There are many times when some pupils' behaviour disrupts the learning of others. As a result, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. Leaders must improve staff's approach to behaviour management so that behaviour is consistently good.
- Too many pupils do not attend school regularly enough. Urgent action is required to reduce the level of absence and to increase the amount of time pupils attend school.
- Having considered the evidence, I strongly recommend that leaders and those responsible for governance do not seek to appoint early career teachers.

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	148378
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10227240
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Stephen Bradshaw
Headteacher	Bex Jones
Website	www.theskyacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- All pupils who attend this school have an EHC plan. Sky Academy is a special school for pupils with emotional, social and mental health difficulties. Many pupils have communication and interaction needs.
- At the time of the inspection, there were no pupils living in the boarding accommodation.
- In April 2021, Sky College converted to academy status. It is now part of LEARN@ multi-academy trust.
- The current headteacher was appointed as the interim headteacher in January 2022. Her appointment as the substantive headteacher was confirmed a week before the inspection.
- Some leaders are still interim, and several middle leaders are new to their roles.
- The school currently uses five alternative providers.

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 interim chair of the academy council, senior leaders, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, PE and personal, social and health education. They met with subject leaders, visited lessons, talked to pupils and teachers and looked at pupils' work.
- Inspectors looked at the policies and procedures used to keep pupils safe. They also reviewed the checks carried out by leaders on the suitability of adults who work in the school.
- Inspectors considered the free-text responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also considered responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Stephen McShane, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Andrew Buckton

Ofsted Inspector

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