

Inspection of Titan Aston Academy

69 Aston Road North, Birmingham B6 4EA

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 May 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils join Titan Aston Academy having had a disrupted education. Many arrive with a negative view of school. Leaders are highly committed to giving pupils every chance to succeed. They strive to provide a high-quality education that will give pupils the knowledge and skills that they need for the future. Leaders are making strong progress towards this goal and the school is well led. However, they know there is still work to do. Staff expect pupils to work hard, do their best and 'aim high'. Most pupils rise to the challenge and enjoy school.

Staff welcome pupils into school each day. They have put clear day-to-day routines in place. This helps staff identify any concerns about pupils. Pupils say they are not worried about bullying. They are confident that if it happens, staff will help.

Staff take the time to get to know pupils. They are proud to be part of the school. Pupils know that staff care about them and want them to do well. Everyone treats each other with respect. Staff challenge any poor behaviour from pupils calmly and consistently. They work with pupils to help them develop strategies to manage difficult situations. This helps pupils to manage their emotions and improve their behaviour.

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

Leaders want to create a school where all pupils achieve well, regardless of their past experiences. They have constructed a curriculum based around the qualifications pupils need for life after school. It is founded on a strong academic base, blended with vocational qualifications and complemented by a rounded personal development programme.

In some subjects, such as religious education and personal, social, health and economics education (PSHE), leaders have planned a curriculum that builds pupils' learning over time. However, in some other subjects, it does not set out the important knowledge that pupils will build on. This means that teachers are sometimes not alert to what pupils should already know. Subsequently, they do not have the resources to hand to respond when pupils get stuck. Consequently, at times, some pupils struggle to learn.

Pupils complete regular assessments. Teachers use these to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. However, teachers are sometimes too reliant on these. They do not always adapt their teaching when gaps in pupils' learning become evident in lessons. Interventions in English and mathematics are not linked to the curriculum. This means that pupils do not always get the help they need. This is especially true for pupils who have gaps in their phonics knowledge. Leaders have not put a structured programme in place for these pupils in order to help them improve their reading.

Leaders consider pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities when they join the school and share this information with teachers. This helps teachers to meet pupils' specific needs.

Most pupils join the school with a history of poor or non-attendance. Leaders systematically analyse and tenaciously address the reasons behind this. They work with pupils and families to encourage pupils to attend. Staff constantly review and adjust their approach. Consequently, many pupils' attendance improves. Where attendance remains low, leaders work closely with other agencies to get pupils into school.

Support for pupils extends well beyond the academic. Many pupils benefit from well-tailored individual mentoring. In the 'OASIS' room, pupils settle in when they join the school and have a safe space to go to during the day. Some pupils attend for emotional support, while others attend for academic interventions.

Most pupils face significant challenges outside of school. Many are at risk of criminal exploitation or gang affiliation. Staff understand the reality and extent of these risks and address these directly. They routinely challenge views and attitudes that are at odds with fundamental British values, for instance by inviting in ex-offenders to talk about knife crime. Leaders have constructed a PSHE curriculum to support this work. This gives pupils a range of valuable information and broadens their horizons. Pupils learn about different careers. Staff continually encourage pupils to think about their future. They help pupils to apply for college courses or apprenticeships and take them on 'taster' days. Leaders supplement this work with trips and visits, from canoeing and theatre trips to learning how to use public transport and going out to a restaurant.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have put safeguarding pupils at the heart of their work. They ensure that pupils and staff feel safe and are safe in school. Staff are well trained and alert to the safeguarding risks pupils face outside of school. They report any concern swiftly, no matter how small. Leaders follow these reports up promptly and work closely with other agencies to ensure pupils get the help they need in a timely manner. The culture of safeguarding is strong.

Leaders carry out thorough checks on the suitability of adults working in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the curriculum does not set out the foundational knowledge and understanding that pupils need to recall and draw on when learning something new. This means that teachers are not always well prepared for the

stumbling blocks caused by lost or missed learning. Leaders need to identify the most important knowledge that pupils need in each subject and ensure that this is systematically and logically built into the school's planned curriculum.

- Leaders gather a range of useful information about pupils on entry to identify gaps in their knowledge, but sometimes teachers are overly reliant on this information and do not respond to the gaps in pupils' knowledge or the misconceptions that emerge during lessons. This hinders pupils' learning. Leaders need to ensure that teachers and those leading interventions systematically check pupils' knowledge and understanding and adapt their teaching accordingly. Leaders should also ensure that interventions are well matched to pupils' needs and are linked to pupils' learning in lessons.
- Some pupils arrive at the school without the reading skills that they need to access the secondary curriculum. The school's system for teaching pupils to read is not effective for those who do not yet have the basic phonics knowledge and skills. Leaders should put in place an appropriate phonics programme for those who need it, alongside suitable interventions for those who need additional help with decoding and fluency.

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	146731
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10221878
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	13 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	50
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Nicola Walters
Headteacher	Nikki Hutchison
Website	www.titanastonacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Titan Aston Academy opened in September 2018 and is part of Titan Education Trust. The trust contains two schools, Titan Aston Academy and Titan St George's Academy. Several staff work across both schools.
- The academy admits pupils in Years 10 and 11 who have been excluded, are at risk of permanent exclusion or who have become disengaged from learning. Many pupils have experienced disruption to their education or have refused to attend school in the past.
- Some pupils stay at Titan Aston Academy for just a few weeks, while others complete key stage 4 at the academy.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers that a small number of pupils attend full time.
- The school does not have any religious character.

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 of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors held discussions with the executive headteacher, acting head of school, other senior and middle leaders, including curriculum and pastoral leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and those responsible for careers education.
- Inspectors held discussions with members of the board of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, food technology and PSHE. For each of these subjects, inspectors met with subject leaders, carried out visits to lessons, spoke to pupils and looked at some of their work. Inspectors also reviewed curriculum planning for art and science and visited art lessons.
- Inspectors visited form time and reviewed the schools extra-curricular activities with leaders.
- Inspectors met with members of staff and spoke to pupils formally and informally at various points in the inspection. Inspectors took account of responses to a staff survey.
- An inspector spent time talking to leaders at the one of the external alternative providers used by the school.
- An inspector visited and spent time in the 'junction' room and OASIS provision talking to staff and pupils.
- Inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation 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

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