

Inspection of Eckington School

Dronfield Road, Eckington, Sheffield, Derbyshire S21 4GN

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Significant numbers of pupils say that name calling and bullying are part of their everyday experience and that they do not have confidence in staff to deal with it. They are right to feel this way. Bullying, derogatory language and homophobic behaviours are commonplace, resulting in pupils feeling vulnerable. This creates a culture where pupils are not comfortable being themselves. As one parent explained: 'My child is not able to bring their whole self to school.'

Expectations at the school are too low in a range of curriculum areas. The work that pupils receive in their lessons is not always ambitious enough. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not receive appropriate support to meet their needs. These pupils do not achieve well because staff are not clear about how to support them.

Standards of behaviour are too low. Expectations from leaders about behaviour are not realised. Some pupils report that they feel unsafe. Such views of their experience are correct. Many pupils behave poorly at break and lunchtime. Truancy from lessons occurs daily. Pupils have come to accept that this is typical of how things are at the school. Many pupils, staff and parents and carers agree that standards of behaviour are declining.

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

The school offers a broad range of subjects. However, at the moment, some pupils do not get to study these subjects for long enough, or in sufficient depth. Leaders have identified the need to alter the school's approach to the curriculum so that pupils will study subjects for longer from September.

Pupils' experiences in lessons are inconsistent. The level of challenge in lessons is often low, and the wider school curriculum lacks ambition. The work given to pupils is not always demanding; it fails to build on what was covered before. This is because leaders have not consistently identified what must be taught in each area and when. There is little structure or coherence to curriculum plans in some subjects.

Too often, teachers' use of assessment does not support them to identify and address pupils' misconceptions. As a result, teachers do not use assessment to inform their teaching. Some teachers experience a higher workload than others. This is because of the variation in assessment practice by subject.

Leaders have not ensured that pupils receive the statutory requirements for religious education. The decision to remove the subject from the curriculum means that pupils do not cover in any depth important cultural concepts, and ideas related to spirituality or different beliefs. They do not have enough time to explore or debate

ideas to improve their understanding and acceptance of those who are different to themselves.

Pupils who are at an early stage of reading, including some pupils with SEND, do not receive the support that they need to learn to read fluently as soon as possible. Pupils who join the school requiring help to catch up do not receive the support that they need. There is not a sharp focus, or adequate training for staff, to close gaps in pupils' knowledge quickly enough so that they become fluent readers. Most pupils do not demonstrate a love of reading and do not read regularly.

Leaders do not deal well with incidents of poor behaviour. This is having a damaging effect on learning, welfare and morale. Many pupils, parents and staff raised concerns about behaviour. For example, a significant number of staff expressed concern about pupils' behaviour and conduct. These staff reported that behaviour was not improving and that it had deteriorated.

Leaders have not ensured that they record attendance accurately. Too many pupils truant and leaders do not know where all pupils are during the school day. Leaders have not taken effective action to address this as their systems for recording attendance are flawed. They do not make adequate checks when pupils are absent from school. This means that they do not know whether pupils are safe.

Leaders have ensured that students receive effective careers education and guidance. This is particularly effective in the sixth form.

Most students enjoy their sixth-form experience. They get on well with staff and with each other. Students benefit from their teachers' subject knowledge in the sixth form and from the range of courses on offer. Despite this, their experience is still not consistent. Work for students is not always demanding enough, carefully sequenced or tailored sufficiently to individual needs.

There are many extra-curricular opportunities for pupils to access in the wider school, particularly in sports. Aspects of the school's personal development or 'character' programme are effective, including the teaching of relationships, sex and health education. Pupils learn about how to become responsible citizens. However, this has not ensured that they do not experience discrimination from their peers.

Trust and senior leaders do not have clear enough oversight of the quality of the school's provision. They have not acted swiftly enough to deal with the school's weaknesses. They have not fully prioritised the critical areas of safeguarding, bullying and the provision for pupils with SEND that the pupils desperately need to feel safe and achieve. Leaders have not acted with sufficient urgency; change has simply not been rapid enough. Leaders have not shown that they are able to bring about sustained improvement.

While some staff feel well supported in school, others feel that workload has increased. This has affected staff who have either duplicated work or carried out assessment that does not lead to pupils knowing and remembering more.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders have not maintained their records or their monitoring of safeguarding effectively. Record-keeping is poor. Sometimes, when concerns arise, the essential support and education needed to keep pupils safe does not happen. Leaders do not reliably secure the help that pupils need, nor do they routinely gain access to agencies to provide support for pupils when this is appropriate. Rather than defined procedures, the follow-up actions to these incidents are informal discussions. These conversations are often missed.

The school has not always undertaken all of the necessary checks on suitability of adults who come into contact with pupils while at the school, and so this is not effective.

Leaders have not ensured that all staff, including those in key roles, have had sufficient safeguarding training to know how to keep pupils safe. Some staff do not understand their safeguarding responsibilities.

Leaders do not accurately monitor the attendance of pupils who are educated off site. Consequently, they do not know if or when these pupils attend. Leaders are not assured of these pupils' welfare.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Those responsible for governance have not held leaders to account for the performance of the school. They do not have a precise view of what needs to improve and how. Consequently, they have not demonstrated the capacity to improve the school. Those responsible for governance should ensure that they hold leaders to account more effectively for all aspects of the school's work. They must ensure that pupils receive a good quality of education. They should also ensure that they gain the confidence of pupils, parents and staff.
- The school's safer recruitment arrangements are not effective. Leaders have not assured themselves that all adults who attend the school are suitable to work with pupils. As a matter of urgency, trustees and senior leaders should ensure that recruitment procedures are robust, so that safeguarding requirements are met.
- Leaders' work to keep pupils safe is not effective. When safeguarding concerns arise, leaders have been too slow to act. They have not ensured that pupils about whom they have safeguarding concerns receive the support they need. Leaders must ensure that the actions they take in response to any safeguarding concerns are both timely and appropriate, so that they are effective in helping to keep pupils safe.

- Leaders do not monitor attendance effectively. They do not have sufficient oversight of which pupils are present and which are absent. Leaders do not always know the whereabouts of absent pupils, including those who truant during the school day and those who are educated away from the school site. Leaders should ensure that they have a comprehensive oversight of attendance, so that they can assure themselves of the whereabouts and safety of those pupils who are absent or who are educated elsewhere.
- The provision for pupils with SEND is ineffective. Leaders have not ensured that the quality of education provided by the school is ambitious for all pupils. At present, pupils with SEND do not get sufficient support to achieve well. Leaders need to make sure that teachers and teaching assistants have the necessary knowledge and understanding to be able to support all pupils effectively in their learning.
- Leaders have not consistently identified the important knowledge that pupils must remember in each subject. Pupils do not have a secure depth of knowledge and are not able to apply this to other topics or subjects. Leaders should ensure that there is clarity around what key knowledge and concepts pupils should be able to remember and when, to enable them to be successful.
- Leaders have not ensured that the school is somewhere pupils feel safe from bullying or poor behaviour. Leaders do not support staff in managing behaviour. A significant number of pupils disrupt the learning of others and many pupils do not feel confident to be themselves in school. Pupils rightly lack confidence that staff will deal with concerns effectively. Leaders need to ensure that there is a culture of acceptance and that pupils who raise concerns are assured that staff will help to resolve their concerns.
- Leaders have not ensured that all staff have had appropriate support to fulfil the roles that they are expected to perform. This includes those responsible for attendance and safeguarding. Leaders must ensure that staff have the necessary support and capacity to complete their roles effectively, so that they can deliver the care that pupils deserve.

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	145521
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10227779
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
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	1275
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	141
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kimberley Bottomley
Principal	Nick Melson
Website	www.eckington.net
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of LEAP Trust.
- The principal joined the school in September 2020.
- The vice principal and an additional assistant principal joined in April 2022.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative provision 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

The inspector 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 held meetings with senior leaders, other leaders, staff and pupils. They met with leaders from the trust, including the chief executive officer, and the chair and vice-chair of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, science, art and history. In each subject, inspectors reviewed the curriculum with subject leaders, conducted lesson visits, spoke to teachers, had discussions with staff and pupils, and looked at pupils' work. Inspectors also visited lessons and reviewed the curriculums in modern foreign languages and geography.
- Inspectors observed pupils reading to staff. They met with groups of pupils across year groups.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and looked at documentation relating to safeguarding, the school's system for recruiting staff and the school's single central record.
- An inspector visited the school's isolation room.
- An inspector spoke to a representative of an alternative provision.
- An inspector met with mentors of teachers new to the teaching profession.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted Parent View online survey, including free-text comments. They considered the responses from staff and pupils to the respective Ofsted surveys.
- The inspection team reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, curriculum plans and information about pupils' attendance, behaviour and exclusions.

Inspection team

Stuart Anderson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Lewis	Ofsted Inspector
Roxanne Fearn-Davies	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lisa Harrison	Ofsted Inspector
Ellenor Beighton	Ofsted Inspector

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