

Inspection of Arden Academy

Station Road, Knowle, Solihull, West Midlands B93 0PT

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Ofsted has not previously inspected Arden Academy as an academy school under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections.

Previous inspection grade

Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Senior leaders' exceptionally high aspirations permeate school life. They expect high standards of all staff, pupils and themselves. On the whole, these standards are met. Pupils enjoy attending. All staff want pupils to thrive and achieve strong academic outcomes. Pupils frequently do and they flourish.

Leaders have carefully planned a wide-ranging enrichment programme to further pupils' interests and talents. This includes more than 70 activities that pupils can choose from during the school week. For example, an LGBTQ+ club, chess club and numerous music and drama activities. Many pupils attend regularly. Pupils value these opportunities and say that there is something for everyone to do.

Pupils are safe and happy. They know who to turn to if they are worried about something. Pupils are friendly, courteous and welcoming. They behave well in lessons and around school. When bullying happens, staff deal with it swiftly and effectively. Pupils and staff speak about the 'Arden family' - where no one is left out. The positive relationships between staff and pupils are a joy to observe.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They value the pastoral support and the many opportunities provided for their children both academically and to further their personal development.

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

All staff want pupils to succeed, and they do. Leaders have planned a curriculum that is ambitious for all pupils. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers share leaders' high ambition and say that they 'do not teach classes but individual children'. Leaders have carefully mapped out what pupils should learn over time in most subjects, including in the sixth form. In a few subjects, this planning is not as clear or is in the early stages of development. Leaders know this and support subject leaders with this work.

Teachers adapt learning and consider pupils' prior knowledge to ensure that they remember more over time. This is very successful in subjects such as English, mathematics, geography and music. As a result, pupils' work is of high quality. Equally, teachers use their knowledge about students in the sixth form to plan learning activities carefully that deepen students' understanding of complex topics. Students say that they enjoy learning.

Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to plan tasks that are well matched to pupils' needs. Teachers generally support pupils with SEND well. Pupils with SEND receive targeted support in lessons and benefit from a range of effective intervention strategies should they fall behind. However, some teachers do not always consider carefully enough pupils' needs, particularly those with SEND, when deciding on

learning activities. When this happens, pupils' work is of lower quality and they can lose focus.

Teachers use assessment well in most lessons including in the sixth form. Teachers check effectively that pupils have understood everything they have been taught. They quickly adjust their teaching to fill any gaps in pupils' knowledge. Teachers do not use assessment as effectively on a few occasions. They do not always identify gaps in pupils' knowledge quickly enough. In these cases, gaps persist and pupils are not able to draw upon their previous learning.

Leaders have planned a wide range of opportunities for pupils and sixth-form students to develop their passions outside of the classroom. For instance, performing clubs such as the choir and theatre shows, sporting clubs like hockey, creative writing clubs and many more. All pupils have leadership opportunities. For example, older students mentor and coach younger pupils. Pupils value these and engagement is high. All pupils, including in the sixth form, benefit from highly effective teaching about career pathways and further education options.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. These are understood by all. Pupils behave very well in lessons and at break and lunchtimes. The vast majority of lessons are free from disruption. Positive and caring relationships between staff and pupils are commonplace.

Leaders promote a love of reading. For example, pupils read in tutor time and meet visiting authors. Many are actively engaged in working in the library or attend reading clubs. Consequently, pupils, including in the sixth form, enjoy reading and do so often. Leaders act swiftly to put effective interventions in place for any pupils who may need support with their reading.

Senior leaders know their school very well and are motivated to improve it further. They act swiftly and with determination to improve any aspects that do not meet their high expectations. Senior leaders and governors collect a range of information about the school and use this to continuously improve the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive the training they need to spot any signs that a child may need help. All staff know who to refer any issues on to. They know about potential risks that exist within their local and regional community. Leaders work well with outside agencies. Staff seek help and advice to ensure pupils are safe. Safeguarding staff give extra appropriate help to families when required. Leaders complete the required employment checks and keep accurate records.

Pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe. They confidently speak about minimising any risks that exist online and on social media, for example.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not match learning activities to pupils' needs carefully enough, especially for pupils with SEND. When this is the case, pupils' work can be of low quality, left unfinished or not completed. In some cases, pupils can lose focus from their learning. Leaders should ensure that all staff consider consistently the needs of all pupils when deciding on learning activities.
- Teachers do not use assessment effectively enough on some occasions to check what pupils have learned and can remember. This means that gaps in pupils' knowledge are not always addressed swiftly enough. Leaders should make sure that all staff use assessment consistently well to check pupils' understanding before moving learning on.

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	136333
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	10229062
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy
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	1,811
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	304
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Dr Celia O'Donovan
Headteacher	David Warwood
Website	http://www.arden.solihull.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is a larger than average-size secondary school.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at two registered 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 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.

- Inspectors met with senior leaders including the executive headteacher, the associate headteacher, deputy headteachers and assistant headteachers. The lead inspector held a meeting with governors including the chair of governors and trustees, including the chair and the trust chief executive officer. Meetings were held with curriculum leaders and the SEND coordinator.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, music, modern foreign languages and geography. 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. Other subjects were considered during the inspection.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at break and lunchtimes. Inspectors spoke to many pupils informally about their experience at the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of safeguarding information, including the school's safeguarding policy, spoke to staff and pupils about safeguarding and looked at how pupils learn to keep themselves safe. The lead inspector spoke to the safeguarding leader about the reporting and recording of any safeguarding incidents.
- Inspectors took account of the parent free-text comments and the responses on Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered the responses to the pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Bianka Zemke, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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