

Inspection of a good school: Reach School

High Street, King's Heath, Birmingham, West Midlands B14 7BB

Inspection dates:

18 and 19 October 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are well cared for at Reach School. Staff are acutely aware that many pupils do not have a positive view of education when they join. Nevertheless, staff work hard to build strong relationships with them. This helps to create a purposeful learning environment. Staff want pupils to be successful, and have high expectations of what they can achieve by the end of Year 11.

The majority of pupils generally behave well. On most occasions, pupils are calm and respectful towards staff. They understand the school rules and know what is expected of them. Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that staff will deal quickly with incidents of poor behaviour or bullying, should these arise.

Pupils can study a range of suitable courses at the school. On occasion, the curriculum is not implemented well. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not always get the most effective support, including help with their reading skills. This can slow their progress.

Many pupils enjoy the school's 'active citizenship' days. These have a focus on developing pupils' character through lessons and off-site activities. Pupils experience a range of trips, including for indoor caving, mountain biking and walks in the Malvern Hills.

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

Leaders have put in place an ambitious curriculum. Pupils work towards GCSE qualifications in core subjects, as well as studying a further two options. Alongside this, pupils can also achieve qualifications in functional skills. The curriculum is well structured and sequenced. Careful thought has been given to the order in which topics are studied, as well as the wider content pupils should learn. In English, for example, pupils work

towards their English language GCSE, but also have opportunities to look at a range of literary texts, such as Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'.

Where teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject, the curriculum is taught effectively. Staff are mindful that pupils join the school throughout the academic year. They therefore recognise the importance of revisiting learning. In science, for example, pupils could recall their recent lessons on non-communicable diseases and had a broad knowledge of the key points they needed to remember. However, this is not consistent across all subjects. Not all staff have the required subject or teaching knowledge to deliver the curriculum effectively. Where this is the case, lessons are disjointed and pupils are trying to learn new things without the secure prior knowledge they need.

Leaders place importance on helping to develop pupils' reading skills. There are paired reading interventions as well as whole-class reading texts as part of form time. In addition, staff build in regular times for pupils to read high-quality reading material across the curriculum. However, the initial assessment pupils complete on arrival at the school does not pinpoint their specific areas of weakness. As a result, the additional reading support that staff provide is not precisely targeted to help weaker readers catch up quickly.

Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND have their learning plans reviewed regularly. Staff also receive training sessions on how to best support pupils with SEND. However, leaders are not always fully meeting pupils' needs or ensuring that staff consistently use the most appropriate strategies in the classroom to support pupils.

In most lessons, pupils show a positive attitude to their learning and behave appropriately. Leaders track and monitor pupils' behaviour carefully to identify patterns or trends. Staff, including some leaders, do not implement the school's new approach to managing pupils' behaviour with consistency. This is not helping pupils to modify their behaviour as well as they should.

The school's careers programme is strong. Pupils have many different experiences across Years 10 and 11. They are aware of the different routes available to them when they leave school. Last year, pupils in Year 10 were involved in a community project with a local charity to create a new flower-bed in a park. Pupils enjoy and value the various team-building and marketing workshops in which they can participate. Pupils in Year 11 benefit from a weekly 'pathways' lesson where they learn about writing a CV and different employability skills. The school's recent careers fair provided pupils with a valuable opportunity to get information about their future options and to talk to local colleges and apprenticeship providers.

Governors are highly knowledgeable. They have an accurate view of the school. They recognise that the school is in a period of transition and that there is work to do for it to improve. Many staff enjoy working here and recognise the important work the school does to re-engage pupils in education. However, a small number of staff expressed concern about their workload and do not always feel valued for the work they do.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have clear processes and systems in place to help identify those pupils who may be at risk of harm. Staff receive regular training on safeguarding, including a weekly briefing where leaders can share concerns and discuss key safeguarding issues that have emerged in the local community.

Leaders act swiftly to ensure that referrals to external agencies are made in a timely way. Leaders keep accurate and up-to-date records of their work and take appropriate action to support pupils.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through the school's 'life skills', 'active citizenship' and 'pathways' lessons. This includes topics such as knife crime, county lines and harmful sexual behaviour.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A few staff do not have the appropriate level of subject and teaching knowledge to deliver the curriculum well. This means that some lessons are not well structured, and pupils therefore struggle with their learning. Leaders should provide appropriate training so that all staff know how best to teach their subject.
- Leaders do not accurately assess and identify gaps in pupils' reading knowledge. This means that some pupils are not provided with the right support to help them develop their fluency and wider enjoyment of reading. Leaders should ensure that processes for identifying and supporting weaker readers are robust and help pupils to catch up quickly.
- Leaders have not made sure that all staff implement the school's new behaviour approach consistently well. This means that some pupils do not benefit from clear routines and expectations in every lesson. Leaders should ensure that all staff continue to receive support so that there is a shared and consistent understanding of how to address incidents of poor behaviour.
- Staff do not support all pupils with SEND as well as they should. This means that some pupils' special educational needs are not being fully met. Leaders should ensure that they accurately identify the needs of pupils with SEND on admission or when they present with needs. They should also ensure that teachers consistently use appropriate strategies in the classroom to help these pupils access learning.
- A small number of staff do not feel well supported by leaders with their workload. In addition, they do not feel that they are clear about how they can contribute to improving the school. Leaders should take action to provide appropriate support and clarity to staff to help the school progress and move forward.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 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.

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	139671
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10240492
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	4 and a further 20 who are dual registered
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Malcolm Weaver
Headteacher	Nicola Redhead
Website	www.reachschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 and 24 May 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Reach School is part of the Birmingham South Network of schools.
- The school offers provision for pupils who have been, or are at risk of, permanent exclusion.
- Most pupils join the school during Year 10 or Year 11 and are dual registered with their home school.
- The school uses three unregistered alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school had 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 carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, science, and personal, social, health and economic education. 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.

- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents. These included information about behaviour, attendance, the school curriculum and improvement planning. The school website was also checked.
- Inspectors talked to staff and leaders about safeguarding arrangements. They examined how leaders conduct employment checks on staff and scrutinised further safeguarding records. They also asked how incidents reported by pupils are recorded and analysed.
- Inspectors observed informal times of the day to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and pupils. They also talked informally to pupils and staff to gather general information about school life.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and free-text comments. Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Mark Howes, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Ian Tustian

His Majesty's Inspector

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