

# Inspection of The Bulwell Academy

Hucknall Lane, Nottingham NG6 8AQ

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Inspection dates: 4 and 5 October 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Inadequate**

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The quality of education

**Inadequate**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Inadequate**

Personal development

**Inadequate**

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?**

Too many pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not receive the education that they deserve. Leaders have not identified their learning needs accurately. Leaders' expectations of what these pupils can achieve are far too low.

Behaviour is usually calm in lessons and at social times. However, the behaviour policy does not work well for all pupils. Leaders do not make reasonable adjustments for pupils who have additional needs.

Pupils say that bullying happens in school. They are not always confident that their teachers will resolve bullying effectively.

Pupils do not receive enough opportunities to enrich their learning. They are not supported to venture outside of their community to experience new things. They do not learn enough about different faiths and cultures. Most pupils do not take part in any extra-curricular clubs or activities. They are not given the chance to develop new skills and talents.

Students in the sixth form value the support they receive from their teachers. They are sufficiently prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training.

Systems to safeguard pupils are poor. Pupils who attend alternative provision are not adequately monitored. School leaders are not always clear if pupils are attending and are safe.

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

School leaders have adopted the trust's curriculum for key stage 3. It is broad in scope and meets the requirements of the national curriculum. Support from the trust's subject leaders has helped teachers to deliver the new curriculum. However, the curriculum is not yet adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. Leaders do not ensure that gaps in the knowledge of pupils with SEND are filled. Leaders do not ensure that all pupils are supported to achieve ambitious curriculum goals. Despite recent improvements, at key stage 4, pupils do not know and remember as much as they should.

Many pupils enter the school with weak reading skills. Leaders have failed to make sure that a well-structured, rigorous and sequential reading programme is in place. Pupils at the early stages of reading do not receive the help that they need. Many of these pupils struggle to access the curriculum because they cannot read well.

Many teachers have good subject knowledge. At times, they use questioning skilfully. Some of the methods that teachers use to assess what pupils know and understand do not work well. Too often, this means that teachers do not know what

pupils know and can do. This limits those teachers' ability to pick up on and correct pupils' misconceptions.

Pupils in key stage 3 benefit from a well-planned personal, social and health education. This is not the case for some older pupils. They do not receive a comprehensive, age-appropriate programme that helps to keep them safe and healthy. Although improving, careers information and guidance is not as comprehensive as needed. Leaders do not ensure that pupils are given sufficient introduction to further and higher education.

Leaders have not put systems in place to ensure that all pupils attend regularly. Some pupils are frequently absent. There is little sign of pupils' attendance improving at the pace needed.

The sixth form is small. Currently there are no students studying in Year 12. A small proportion of students said that they do not feel part of the broader life of the school. They do not have appropriate spaces to socialise and study. Even so, most students appreciate the care and support that they receive from their teachers. One student spoke for many when they said: 'Teachers really push us to do well. A pass isn't good enough, we have to aim for a merit or a distinction!' These students are a credit to their teachers. Students gain the skills and knowledge that they need to progress to the next steps in their education, employment or training. Many move on to further education.

Leaders, including those from the trust, have identified the school's weaknesses. They are beginning to bring about improvements to some aspects of the school's provision. However, improvements have been implemented slowly. Leaders are not taking effective action to rectify some of the significant weaknesses that remain, for example to safeguarding arrangements.

Staff have experienced a lot of change. They acknowledge that the school needs to improve quickly. Some staff expressed concerns about their workload and the negative impact this is having on their health.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Safeguarding systems are not robust. Leaders cannot be sure that appropriate actions have been taken to keep a pupil safe. Safeguarding concerns are not always shared with the appropriate partners and agencies. Leaders do not ensure that serious concerns are appropriately escalated. Leaders, including those in the trust, are beginning to improve safeguarding arrangements, however, significant weaknesses remain.

Leaders do not do enough to check that all pupils in alternative provision are safe. Leaders do not record pupils' attendance accurately. They cannot be sure where pupils are.

The checks made when employing school staff meet statutory requirements.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Pupils with SEND do not receive an adequate education. These pupils do not acquire the knowledge and skills that they should. Leaders must rapidly make sure that the needs of pupils with SEND are accurately identified. They must ensure that pupils with SEND benefit from an ambitious and inclusive curriculum that is well taught.
- Teachers do not use assessment skilfully to check what pupils know. They do not identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. Some pupils do not progress to achieve ambitious curriculum goals. Leaders must make sure that meaningful checks take place in lessons, so that teaching is adapted to meet pupils' learning needs.
- Leaders do not take appropriate action to support, manage and moderate the behaviour of vulnerable pupils and pupils with SEND. Too many are removed from lessons and placed in the school's 'reset' provision or suspended. This is not always in pupils' best interests. It does not support pupils to modify their behaviour. Consequently, pupils miss out on their learning and the gaps in their knowledge grow wider. Leaders must make sure that the behaviour policy supports and challenges all pupils to behave well.
- Many pupils do not have the reading knowledge necessary to access the curriculum. Leaders must urgently put in place a well-planned, structured and resourced reading programme. Pupils must be supported to read accurately and fluently without delay.
- Pupil absence is high. The systems in place to manage and improve pupils' attendance are not effective. Leaders must make sure that pupils, including pupils with SEND, attend school regularly.
- Safeguarding arrangements are ineffective. Leaders must continue their work to ensure that safeguarding systems quickly identify the pupils who require support. They must ensure that support is received swiftly, appropriate agencies are involved and that concerns are appropriately escalated. Records should be an accurate and comprehensive account of the actions taken to keep pupils safe.
- Safeguarding arrangements for pupils who attend off-site alternative provision are poor. Leaders must make sure that appropriate checks are undertaken before a pupil is placed in a provision. They must ensure that robust systems are in place to check that pupils are attending, that they are studying an appropriate curriculum and that they remain safe when being educated away from school.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	145952
<b>Local authority</b>	Nottingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10241313
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1073
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	23
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Abbie Rumbold
<b>Principal</b>	Sara Wildes
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://bulwellacademy.co.uk">bulwellacademy.co.uk</a>

## Information about this school

- The principal joined the school in April 2022.
- The school uses nine alternative providers. Seven alternative providers used by the school are unregistered.
- 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 graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, His 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 improvements 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 senior leaders. The lead inspector met with members of the Creative Education Trust. She spoke with the director of education.
- Inspectors undertook deep dives in reading, mathematics, geography and physical education. As part of the deep dives, inspectors spoke with curriculum leaders to review the curriculum, visited lessons and considered pupils' and sixth-form students' work. They spoke to pupils, sixth-form students and teachers. They visited the library.
- An inspector visited one alternative provision. He held telephone conversations with a further six unregistered alternative providers.
- Inspectors held a series of meetings with leaders and pupils to discuss the school's safeguarding arrangements. They spoke with sixth-form students. They scrutinised a range of records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors observed pupils and sixth-form students at different times of the school day, including the start and end of day and at lunchtime and breaktime. They made numerous visits to 'reset' and to 'the hub'.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff, pupils, parents and carers through discussions and Ofsted's online surveys. Inspectors read emails and letters from parents.

## Inspection team

Jayne Ashman, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Keval Thakrar	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Wilson	Ofsted Inspector
Mike Pride	Ofsted Inspector

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