

# Inspection of a good school: Abbs Cross Academy and Arts College

Abbs Cross Lane, Hornchurch, Essex RM12 4YB

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Inspection dates:

13 and 14 December 2022

## Outcome

Abbs Cross Academy and Arts College continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Trustees, leaders and staff have high expectations for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils respond well to the demands of their teachers. They embrace the opportunities the school offers.

Pupils feel happy and safe. They appreciate the pastoral care they receive. Pupils behave well. Relationships between pupils are supportive and respectful. Bullying is rare. When it does occur, leaders act quickly. Some pupils are anti-bullying coordinators, who lead assemblies and are available for pupils to talk to.

Leaders have created a strong ethos of older pupils supporting others. For example, health ambassadors from Year 10 lead aspects of physical education (PE) for Year 7 pupils, and a group of Year 11 pupils volunteered overseas.

Pupils develop their talents and interests through a wide range of clubs. Those who take part in music, dance and drama clubs are particularly enthusiastic about these. Pupils typically express the view that these clubs allow them to 'learn to be a professional'. Leaders ensure that pupils take part in visits to enhance their learning. For example, pupils visited a theatre to take part in a workshop on Romeo and Juliet, which they were studying in lessons.

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

Leaders have created an ambitious curriculum. In Years 7 to 9, all pupils follow a broad range of subjects. These include dance and drama as part of the school's performing arts specialism. In Years 10 and 11, pupils can choose from a range of academic and vocational courses.

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is carefully sequenced. Pupils build up their knowledge towards demanding end points. For example, in geography, pupils initially

learn how to find out information about a location from a map. After this, pupils learn how to use this knowledge to interpret a satellite image.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They use this to break down new information into smaller parts. In some cases, however, teachers do not ensure that pupils understand each part before moving on. This means that pupils do not always achieve as well as they could.

Teachers make sure that pupils have opportunities to revisit and embed what they already know. This helps pupils learn and remember important information in the long term. Teachers use feedback from assessment to identify topics that need further input and any pupils who need additional help.

Leaders prioritise pupils with SEND. These pupils receive specialist careers guidance and take part in a weekly review of their progress. A teacher in each subject department acts as a SEND ambassador. They ensure that teachers in their subject know the best ways to adapt their teaching for pupils with SEND. This means that pupils with SEND work towards the same goals as their peers.

Leaders support struggling readers to improve their reading. They ensure staff receive specialist training. Staff use this to ensure that reading intervention is well matched to pupils' needs so that pupils catch up quickly.

Leaders and staff have high expectations of behaviour. Where there is low-level disruption, teachers use the school procedures to deal with it decisively and minimise any interruption in learning.

Leaders place great importance on personal development. Pupils are taught about healthy relationships, mental health and local issues, including knife crime. Pupils can talk to their Year Care Team if they need further support with any of these issues.

Leaders have planned a careers programme that focuses on preparing pupils for the next stage in their education or training. Pupils find out about apprenticeships, employers and further education. They receive individual support with their applications for education and/or training. However, pupils do not find out about the range of careers each subject can lead to. This restricts the range of options pupils consider for the next stage of their education or training.

Staff are proud to work at the school. Leaders engage with staff. They have taken steps to reduce workload, including changes to the marking policy.

The multi-academy trust has delegated some responsibilities for oversight of the school to members of the academy committee. This group know the school well and use their expertise to hold leaders to account.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Leaders ensure that staff take part in regular training, including local issues such as involvement with gangs. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

Staff and pupils are encouraged to report any concerns they might have. Leaders act on all reports and keep records of the action taken. Leaders have strong links with external agencies so that pupils get extra support when it is needed. Leaders make regular checks to ensure that safeguarding procedures are being followed.

Leaders carry out relevant checks on the suitability of adults working at the school.

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

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

- Teaching does not consistently take into account gaps in learning that pupils might have. As a result, sometimes, pupils' progression through the curriculum is not secured. Leaders should ensure that teachers routinely check on previous learning and then close any gaps before they introduce new material.
- Careers education is not fully embedded in the curriculum. Pupils do not find out about the range of careers each subject can lead to. This limits pupils' knowledge of progression routes. Leaders should ensure that careers are considered through the curriculum.

## 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 September 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136663
<b>Local authority</b>	Havering
<b>Inspection number</b>	10255442
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	888
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	David Low
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nicola Jethwa
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.abbscross.net">www.abbscross.net</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19 to 20 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Careers guidance meets the requirement of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- On occasion, the school makes use of alternative provision for a very small number of pupils. Currently, there are a few pupils attending registered alternative providers, The Bridge and Koru Academy, and a few pupils attending unregistered alternative providers, Lambourne End and Evolve and Adapt.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other school leaders and teaching staff. Inspectors held a discussion with three members of the academy committee and one member of the board of trustees.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: design and technology, geography and mathematics. 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 also visited lessons and discussed the curriculum with subject leaders in a range of other subjects, including history and music.
- Inspectors held meetings with school leaders about careers education and reading.
- Inspectors observed behaviour in lessons and around the school. Inspectors held formal and informal discussions with groups of pupils from different year groups.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders, pupils and staff about the arrangements for safeguarding and reviewed safeguarding records and documentation. Inspectors also checked the single central record of checks made on the suitability of staff.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey, responses to the staff survey and responses to the online survey for parents, Parent View.

### **Inspection team**

Gary Phillips, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Yvonne Chisholm

Ofsted Inspector

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