

Inspection of a good school: Engage Academy

Park Road, Batley, West Yorkshire WF17 5LP

Inspection dates:

2 and 3 February 2023

Outcome

Engage Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Engage Academy is a place where pupils learn the academic and social skills for their next steps in education. Leaders have high expectations for pupils. They ensure that staff share their ambition for pupils to re-engage with learning. Skilled staff enable pupils to re-focus on learning and develop positive school routines. Pupils are well supported to get back on track.

Pupils join the school when they have been permanently excluded or need time out from mainstream school. Most pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Some pupils are assessed for an education, health and care (EHC) plan while they attend. The school is inclusive. It is supportive of pupils' individual needs. Pupils who need help to manage their behaviour are well supported.

Pupils learn to express their views productively. They are taught how to engage with views that are different to their own. Leaders ensure that pupils experience a wide variety of personal development opportunities. The forest school adds a valuable dimension to the curriculum offer. Pupils learn to develop positive relationships with adults and other pupils. They learn about positive mental health and being physically healthy.

The school is small and well resourced. Staff know pupils very well. Staff and pupils have strong relationships. These are evident throughout the school. This ensures that most pupils are happy in school. If bullying were to occur, pupils know staff would support them.

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

Leaders have developed a curriculum that meets the needs of pupils well. They prioritise reading and developing phonic knowledge. 'Story and snack time' is a popular part of the school day. Reading features in all lessons. Teachers and support staff are well trained in teaching reading. They read with expression. Pupils engage well with reading. They can

describe class texts and the books they have read. Pupils use the skills they learn to access a variety of reading material. Most pupils develop reading fluency well.

Across the curriculum, leaders have mapped out the important knowledge and skills pupils should learn. Knowledge builds over time. Pupils revisit learning regularly. For example, the mathematics curriculum is well sequenced. Work is adapted to meet pupils' individual needs. This ensures that pupils are not rushed. Pupils achieve well in mathematics. In other subject areas, pupils' work is generally well organised. Pupils are happy to show their work to visitors. Despite this, the quality of pupils' written work is underdeveloped. It varies in quality and depth across subjects. Pupils' work is often limited to word-level answers.

More pupils are placed at the school than it has comfortable room for. The impact is felt in school. All learning space is used during the school day. Break-out rooms are regularly used for teaching space. When pupils need space to remain calm, sometimes no spare rooms are available. Pupils use the corridor rather than designated spaces. Leaders do not check pupils' time out of classrooms precisely during these instances. This means they cannot track patterns of behaviour or identify missed learning.

Some pupils have historic poor attendance. Some pupils start their time at the school after long periods on part-time timetables. Leaders have developed secure systems to improve pupils' attendance. This includes periods of home tuition to re-engage pupils. Staff are patient but unrelenting. Most pupils improve their attendance during their time at school. Most pupils show an improvement in their behaviour and attitudes during their placement. Pupils generally behave well. Occasionally, there are pockets of behaviour that do not meet leaders' expectations. Staff intervene swiftly to support pupils.

Pupils' personal development is noteworthy. It meets pupils' needs well. Pupils visit places of worship. They engage with people who are different to them. Pupils learn to swim and experience residential visits. Relationships and sex education is carefully planned. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught in a dedicated lesson each week. This learning is intelligently woven into other curriculum areas. Leaders are responsive to issues that pupils face. During the inspection, pupils were learning about sensible text messaging. Morning 'check-in time' includes assembly. Pupils prepare breakfast together and discuss national and international events. Staff promote British values throughout.

Trustees and representatives from the multi-academy trust provide effective support. They know the school well and understand the issues leaders face. Teachers receive regular professional development. This ensures that they have the skills to deliver their subjects confidently. Teachers appreciate leaders' efforts to reduce workload. Leaders involve staff when making changes to policies. This includes simplifying the assessment policy.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Processes to check the suitability of adults to work with children are secure. Leaders continually explore ways to improve the effectiveness of their work. There is a sizable safeguarding team available in school. A deputy designated safeguarding lead is available to each classroom to support pupils. Staff are vigilant and raise concerns promptly. They receive regular training to ensure they are kept up to date. Leaders ensure staff are well informed. They understand pupils' additional vulnerabilities due to their SEND.

Pupils feel safe in school. They know staff will support them effectively if needed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils' written work is underdeveloped. The depth and quality of written content vary across subjects. Pupils do not always form letters legibly and present their learning clearly. Leaders should provide pupils with opportunities to further develop their handwriting and lessons to improve the depth of written work.
- Leaders do not check pupils' time out of classrooms precisely when they are calming. This means they cannot track patterns or identify missed learning. Leaders should develop systems to monitor pupils' time out of lessons. They should use the information to support pupils with their behaviour and inform teachers about gaps in learning.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Primary Pupil Referral Service, to be good in March 2014.

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	145432
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	10255790
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	37
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Victoria Del Giudice
Headteacher	Alison Ward
Website	www.engageacademy.uk.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Engage Academy is an alternative provision for pupils aged between 5 and 11 years. The school can accommodate 28 pupil places.
- Pupils are admitted to the school at any point in the year. Most pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school admits pupils from the Kirklees area.
- Most pupils access local authority transport to and from school.
- The school is part of the Ethos Academy Trust.
- The school does not make use of alternative education provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met the chair of trustees. They also met the chief executive officer and the director of education from the trust.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and PHSE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector met with the school's designated safeguarding lead. The inspector reviewed the school's safeguarding records, relevant policies and other safeguarding documentation. The inspector reviewed the processes leaders use to identify and help pupils who need support. In addition, the inspector scrutinised the school's records of checks carried out on adults who work at the school.
- Inspectors visited lessons across the school, including activities at break and lunchtime.
- The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The lead inspector met with the special educational needs coordinator. They evaluated the learning experience of a sample of pupils supported by EHC plans.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils formally and informally, including pupils who receive support to improve their behaviour.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- The inspection team spoke to staff about their workload and pupils' behaviour in the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils, staff and parents. This included any free-text responses.

Inspection team

David Mills, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tudor Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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