

# Inspection of The Laurel Academy

Maple Road, Mexborough, South Yorkshire S64 9SD

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Inspection dates: 22 and 23 February 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Leaders are aspirational for all pupils. In class, pupils focus on learning. They study courses which are ambitious and reflect local employment opportunities. A growing number of pupils are studying the English Baccalaureate suite of qualifications. Pupils achieve well in external examinations. Leaders' emphasis on pupils' ability to read is increasingly impactful.

Leaders have established a culture of high expectations. Learning is rarely interrupted by poor behaviour. Staff use rewards often to celebrate pupils' achievements. Bullying is infrequent. When it does happen, staff act effectively to address it. Relationships between pupils and staff are polite and respectful. Pupils attend school regularly and are punctual.

Pupils access a range of extra-curricular activities. These include academic and sporting clubs. Pupils benefit from high-quality vocational taster days at local providers as part of their careers education. Pupils study personal, social and health education during ethics, philosophy and citizenship (EPC) lessons, assemblies and tutor time. Leaders use this time to address important safeguarding issues. They teach pupils to keep themselves safe at school and in the community. Pupils' knowledge of other important learning from this curriculum is not as secure as leaders want. This includes their knowledge of other faiths.

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

Subject leaders have developed a broad curriculum offer. In some subjects, they have drawn on support from elsewhere in the trust. Leaders have identified the most important knowledge that they want pupils to remember. Teachers explain information clearly. New learning builds on what pupils already know. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) follow the same curriculum as their peers. Teachers make regular checks on what pupils know using a 'demonstrate and connect' routine. They adapt lessons well to meet pupils' needs.

Senior leaders have prioritised pupils' ability to read fluently. Pupils in the early stages of learning to read receive additional help. This enables them to catch up quickly. All pupils read regularly in tutor time. Leaders have recently launched the 'reading routes' initiative. This encourages pupils to read more widely. Leaders have chosen texts to engage pupils with important social issues. Some pupils' limited vocabulary prevents them from expressing themselves confidently.

Pupils attend school regularly. Attendance is higher than before the pandemic. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is reducing but is higher than leaders want. Leaders have implemented clear systems for when pupils do not attend. Leaders work well with families to improve their children's attendance further. Pupils are well behaved in classrooms and around the site. Most pupils

effectively regulate their own behaviour. Suspensions are used appropriately, when required. Leaders support pupils well following a suspension. A small number of pupils access learning at alternative providers. Parents and carers contribute to the selection of placements. Senior leaders make these decisions in pupils' best interests.

Leaders' vision for pupils goes beyond the academic. Some aspects of this work are fully realised. Pupils receive a high-quality careers education. All pupils receive independent advice and engage with colleges and employers. Most pupils participate in other events such as the careers fair. Consequently, pupils go on to sustain appropriate future destinations.

The number of enrichment opportunities available to pupils is increasing. What is available currently is of high quality. Many pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, make good use of these. Leaders reward pupils' participation through the 'pledges' programme. A small number of pupils hold leadership roles as ambassadors or members of the student council. Although these are new initiatives, pupils have begun working on projects, such as healthy school meals, and charitable work.

Pupils learn about important concepts such as healthy relationships during their EPC lessons. This curriculum addresses all of the required statutory content. New leaders are aware that some aspects are underdeveloped. For example, pupils' knowledge of other cultures contributes less strongly to their wider development.

Leaders, including those with responsibility for governance, have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and ongoing priorities. The trust has deployed staff from elsewhere in the organisation to support the development of school leaders. This has contributed positively to the improvement of the school. Governors and trustees support and challenge leaders effectively.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils learn about the most significant risks in their community. Staff teach them how to stay safe. In EPC lessons, pupils learn about safeguarding issues such as county lines (county lines is where illegal drugs are transported from one area to another, usually by children or vulnerable people who are coerced into it by gangs) and child criminal exploitation.

Safeguarding leaders are knowledgeable. They ensure that staff are well trained. Staff have a clear understanding about the indicators of possible harm. They know how to report concerns about a pupil's welfare. Leaders keep detailed records of these. Regular meetings of the inclusion team ensure that actions are completed promptly. Leaders have effective relationships with external agencies. They use these to provide additional support to pupils.

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

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

- Some pupils do not have the range of vocabulary needed to express themselves confidently. This limits pupils' ability to contribute effectively to discussions and to access aspects of their learning. Leaders should continue to embed their strategy on reading and oracy.
- Some aspects of the school's EPC curriculum, such as religious education, are not sufficiently well developed. This means that pupils' learning about other cultures and faiths does not contribute strongly to their personal development. Leaders should continue to review and further develop the EPC programme so that it enhances pupils' academic learning.

## 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>	146639
<b>Local authority</b>	Doncaster
<b>Inspection number</b>	10255562
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	644
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Steve Hodsman
<b>Principal</b>	Katy Taylor-Clarke
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://www.laurelacademy.org.uk/">https://www.laurelacademy.org.uk/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the Delta Academies Trust multi-academy trust. It became part of the trust in November 2018.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses four Ofsted-registered alternative providers.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- The lead inspector met with members of the trust board, the local governing body and the director of education (secondary).
- During the inspection, inspectors met with the principal. They also met with other senior and middle leaders, including those responsible for safeguarding, alternative provision, personal development, careers, attendance and behaviour.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, history, computing and design technology. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Members of the inspection team looked at a range of documentation regarding the support that pupils with SEND receive. Inspectors looked at the quality of the provision for pupils with SEND in lessons.
- Inspectors met with the designated lead for safeguarding. They checked records of actions taken by leaders to keep pupils safe. Inspectors scrutinised the single central record of recruitment checks.
- Leaders at the alternative providers spoke to members of the inspection team.
- A wide range of pupils and staff talked with inspectors, formally and informally, about the safeguarding culture in school over the course of the inspection.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- Inspectors looked at a range of information regarding behaviour. Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils at social times.
- The views of parents, pupils and staff who responded to Ofsted's surveys were considered.

### **Inspection team**

Thomas Wraith, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Nick Horn	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Fletcher	Ofsted Inspector
Patricia Head	Ofsted Inspector

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