

Inspection of Robert Barclay Academy

Cock Lane, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire EN11 8JY

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 March 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils like their school, and they feel part of 'a family'. They know that their teachers have high expectations for their behaviour and learning. Pupils are safe because adults care passionately about pupils' mental and physical well-being. If pupils have a concern, they seek help from an adult.

Pupils behave well. They listen attentively to their teachers and other pupils. Pupils interact positively in and out of lessons. Bullying is rare. Should bullying occur, teachers will swiftly resolve it. Pupils are respectful to each other, to adults and to visitors in the school. They are open-minded and welcome people who are different to them. Pupils learn about other world religions. They do not tolerate any prejudicial comments. Pupils are well prepared for life in multicultural Britain and the wider world.

Pupils enjoy learning. They participate enthusiastically in lessons. Their teachers explain ideas clearly and help them when they do not understand. Students in the sixth form are positive role models. They contribute well to the life of the school. Students look out for younger pupils. They support them with their reading and mathematics.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the quality of education the school provides for their children. They acknowledge how the school has improved since the last inspection.

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

Leaders have developed a well-constructed, ambitious curriculum. They precisely identify the knowledge pupils need to learn. This knowledge builds on pupils' prior learning. Leaders provide training to equip teachers with strong subject knowledge. As a result, teachers know how to present content clearly and in stages. This helps pupils to learn quickly and grasp important ideas. Teachers provide pupils with opportunities to revisit what they have learned before. This helps pupils to remember their learning and builds their confidence. 'Curriculum immersion' days enable pupils to learn an area of the curriculum, such as the cold war, in greater depth. As a result, pupils understand better the reasons for conflict and tension in the world today. Results at GCSE for some pupils in mathematics were lower than average in 2022. Since then, leaders have refined the curriculum to ensure that pupils learn mathematics more competently.

Students in the sixth form appreciate the range of subjects on offer. The curriculum ensures that students hone presentation, debating and research skills. As a result, students grasp more complex ideas and justify their views with evidence. This prepares students well for further education and their professional lives.

Teachers regularly check how well pupils are learning. When pupils make mistakes, teachers help pupils to improve. Leaders provide support for those who fall behind with reading, and pupils catch up. Most pupils read well and often.

Although increasing, the number of pupils studying languages at key stage 4 remains low. As a result, many pupils do not continue to develop an important life skill. Leaders are in the process of developing more precise plans to increase take up in languages. This will ensure more pupils achieve the English Baccalaureate (EBacc).

Leaders work with outside agencies to identify accurately pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders provide teachers with the guidance to adapt the curriculum appropriately for pupils with SEND. As a result, pupils with SEND gain knowledge well.

Pupils develop healthy relationships because of the well-constructed personal, social and health education curriculum. Pupils understand how harmful behaviours make others feel. They understand how their bodies will change and the responsibilities they will face as they mature.

Leaders provide some clubs and other extra-curricular opportunities. However, participation is low, especially among those pupils with SEND and pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding. Many pupils therefore do not further develop artistic, musical and sporting skills. Leaders acknowledge this. Sixth-form students, however, enjoy a range of extra-curricular activities.

The careers curriculum equips pupils and students well for the future. They receive high-quality advice and guidance about careers and next steps. Pupils and students gain valuable work experience in the local community. The number of students accessing higher education has increased considerably.

Leaders, governors and the trust evaluate accurately how well the school is performing. The trust's work has contributed to improvement in all areas of school life, particularly for the curriculum. Staff appreciate the support they receive from leaders, who are considerate of workload. They value the training that is provided, which has helped them to implement the curriculum well. Leaders have secured the resounding approval of parents. Leaders are thoroughly aware of how to improve the school further. They are well equipped to ensure this happens.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a highly vigilant safeguarding culture. As a result, staff quickly identify any signs that a pupil may be subject to abuse or harm. Staff report concerns promptly. Leaders respond immediately. They seek help from a range of

outside agencies to ensure pupils receive precise support. Leaders keep meticulous safeguarding records.

Pupils fully understand the risks of being online. They know how to report concerns while at school and know how to keep themselves safe when not in school.

Leaders systematically make required checks on all new staff, which ensures safe recruitment.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Participation in extra-curricular activities is low, particularly among pupils with SEND and those in receipt of pupil premium. As a result, many pupils do not have the opportunity to hone further artistic, sporting and musical skills. Leaders should develop willingness among pupils to participate in these activities and consider a broader range of extra-curricular activities.
- Although increasing, the number of pupils taking languages at key stage 4 remains low. As a result, many pupils are not gaining an important life skill. The number of pupils achieving the EBacc is therefore significantly below the national average. Leaders need to formulate precise plans to increase the number of pupils studying languages as they move into key stage 4.

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	143131
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10268175
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	710
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	73
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Martin Sidders
Headteacher	Ced de la Croix
Website	www.robertbarclayacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 and 19 June 2019

Information about this school

- A small number of pupils receive alternative provision with a registered provider. A small number of pupils receive alternative provision with an unregistered provider.
- The school is a member of the Scholars Education Trust.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- 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 the CEO of the trust, chair of the trust, other trustees, the chair of governors, other governors, the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, languages, history and geography. These included discussions with subject leaders, visits to lessons, meetings with staff and pupils, scrutiny of pupils' work and a review of any curriculum documentation. They also scrutinised other curriculum plans.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's single central record and met with the designated safeguarding leader. They scrutinised safeguarding records and spoke with pupils and with staff.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils, staff and parents. There were 58 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 145 responses to the Ofsted pupil survey. There were 168 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors considered 146 free-text responses from parents.

Inspection team

Adam Cooke, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Polly Lankester	Ofsted Inspector
Victoria Hearn	Ofsted Inspector
Aimee Bray	Ofsted Inspector

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