

# Inspection of The Fusion Academy

Moore Road, Barwell, Leicester, Leicestershire LE9 8AG

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Inspection dates: 25 and 26 April 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?**

The Fusion Academy is a welcoming and inclusive school where there are caring relationships between staff and pupils. Leaders have secured a calm learning environment. Pupils enjoy coming to school and say they feel safe.

Leaders and staff have high expectations for all pupils. Staff are quick to notice when a pupil may need some additional support. Staff ensure that pupils have access to sensory breaks or resources that will reduce their anxiety and allow them to continue with their learning. There is very little low-level disruption to learning or the school day as a result.

All pupils show respect for their peers and staff. Pupils know that bullying is unkind. They say that it rarely happens. If it does, pupils know they can talk to adults in school, and they are confident adults will support them.

Pupils enjoy the many activities that this school provides for their personal development, such as 'Fusion Fest', where pupils share their talents with one another.

One parent's comment, typical of many, was: 'My child has flourished in all areas of her development since attending The Fusion Academy. The school has quite literally transformed her life as well as our entire family's.'

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

Leaders have worked at pace to develop a broad and ambitious curriculum. The curriculum meets the specific special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) needs of most pupils in the school. In most subjects, leaders have set out what they expect pupils to learn. In these subjects, most pupils build up the knowledge needed for their next stage of education, employment or training. However, in a small number of subjects, this knowledge is not as clearly defined yet. Consequently, in these subjects, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Communication, including social communication, is at the heart of everything the school does. Staff place huge importance on helping pupils to communicate well. This supports pupils to work as independently as possible and advocate for themselves. Teachers and therapists work collaboratively to understand students' starting points well. They develop individual curriculums for pupils. These meet student's education, health and care plan (EHC plan) outcomes. This includes pathways appropriate to need. Pupils on pathway one follow an academic-based curriculum. Pupils on pathway two have a more vocational curriculum. Staff support pupils well to use a range of communication aids. These aids ensure that pupils access their personalised learning pathways.

Teachers use the lesson structure adopted by the school's leaders of recap, engage, review. Teachers check pupils' progress in lessons regularly. They provide useful feedback that helps pupils to learn more knowledge.

Reading is a priority at the school. Teachers use drama, writing and discussion to bring characters to life. Pupils thoroughly enjoy acting out scenes from plays. This helps build their communication skills. Pupils have many opportunities to read. Pupils who need extra support with reading receive phonics delivered by reading experts.

Leaders and staff help pupils manage their own behaviour well. Staff approach negative behaviour as a form of communication. By doing this, staff quickly understand what is wrong. Staff use planned responses to help pupils. Because of this, learning is rarely disrupted. Pupils and staff regularly discuss positive engagement targets. They celebrate successes together every Friday. This helps to forge strong relationships.

Most pupils attend well because of leaders' highly effective work. Despite this, some pupils are persistently absent.

Opportunities to support pupils' personal development are an integral part of school life. Pupils learn a wide range of topics which help prepare them for the future. These include cookery, online safety and learning about healthy relationships. Pupils learn how to travel confidently and manage their finances carefully. Pupils look forward to activities such as overnight residential stays and enterprise projects.

Pupils receive a comprehensive careers education programme. The independent careers adviser develops career action plans with each pupil. Leaders provide good-quality, meaningful opportunities for pupils to encounter the world of work.

The school is well led by knowledgeable and caring leaders. Leaders receive strong support from the trustees. Trustees know the school well. They rigorously hold leaders to account. Together, they share an ambitious vision for pupils with SEND.

Staff feel well supported by leaders. They say leaders are approachable and considerate of their workload. Staff are proud to work at The Fusion Academy.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff training is up to date and thorough. This means that staff are vigilant and quick to notice if any changes in a pupil's behaviour, appearance or body language may indicate a cause for concern. Leaders work tenaciously to quickly secure the necessary help and support from external agencies, including the local authority, to keep pupils safe. Leaders ensure that all pupils attending alternative provision are safe. Leaders carry out all the necessary pre-employment checks on staff.

Pupils learn how to stay safe in school, the community and online.

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

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

- Leaders have worked at pace to develop the curriculum. Leaders' curriculum planning in a few subjects is still in development. In these subjects, leaders have not yet clearly identified all the important knowledge pupils need to learn and that teachers, therefore, need to assess. Leaders should ensure that they continue to refine the curriculum to clearly identify the precise knowledge that pupils must learn. This will enable teachers to more effectively build on what pupils already know, and to plan activities that are consistently challenging, and therefore maximise pupils' progress towards their academic outcomes.
- Leaders' work to improve pupils' attendance ensures that most pupils attend school well. However, some pupils are persistently absent. This means they miss valuable learning and development of positive school routines. Leaders should continue their work with parents to support them to improve their child's attendance so that they attend school regularly.

### 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>	147858
<b>Local authority</b>	Leicestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10254757
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	69
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Christopher White
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kelly Dryden
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.openthinkingpartnership.co.uk/fusion-academy">www.openthinkingpartnership.co.uk/fusion-academy</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The Fusion Academy caters for pupils with communication and interaction difficulties as their primary need. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The executive headteacher was deployed to The Fusion Academy from within the trust in October 2022. Two co-headteachers took up their roles in April 2023.
- The number of pupils on roll is increasing as more pupils join the school since its opening in September 2020.
- The school makes use of two unregistered alternative provision providers.
- Trustees operate a breakfast club.
- 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

The 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 school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English with reading and communication; mathematics; science and personal, social and health education (PSHE), and the social communication curriculum. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to some pupils about their learning.
- To further look at the curriculum, inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum plans in some other subjects, including looking at examples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to discuss the actions taken to keep pupils safe. The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including the school's single central record of pre-employment checks.
- Inspectors met with pupils and students from all year groups to gather their views about the school.
- To look at how pupils and students are prepared for adulthood, the lead inspector met with leaders, pastoral staff and the independent careers adviser.
- Inspectors examined a range of school documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation, improvement plans, records of governance and documentation relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour. Inspectors also reviewed the documents available on the school and trust websites.
- Inspectors involved informal times, including break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors met with support staff.
- The lead inspector met with governors and trust representatives.
- Inspectors took account of responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the pupil survey and the staff survey. An inspector spoke informally with parents at the end of the school day.

## Inspection team

Anne Maingay, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Christine Horrocks

Ofsted Inspector

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