

Inspection of a good school: North Birmingham Academy

395 College Road, Erdington, Birmingham, West Midlands B44 0HF

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 October 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Jo Paddock. This school is part of the E-ACT multi-academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Tom Campbell, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by James Philip Knight. There is also an executive headteacher, Michelle Scott, who is responsible for this school and one other.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this school. This is because they feel safe and staff look after their welfare. Pupils value their relationships with one another and trust their school staff. If they have a concern, they know these adults will listen to them and act in their best interests. Pupils appreciate this care.

The school is ambitious for every pupil, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, not all pupils learn and remember the essential knowledge they need to progress. Pupils with SEND often do not understand what is expected of them because tasks are not adapted well enough. Many early readers struggle to understand new words in their lessons. These experiences hold pupils back.

Sixth-form students achieve well and are ready for their next steps. Most go on to university, including Oxford University. Some have earned places to read law and medicine.

The school has set high expectations of pupils' conduct. Pupils rise to this and behave well. They now respect the school's polite and ordered community. Bullying and banter are rare. When it occurs, staff address this promptly.

Pupils benefit and participate in a range of extra-curricular activities, including dodgeball, dance and drama. This helps them to expand their interests and be active in the wider school community.

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

The school has revised its approach to the management of pupils' behaviour. It has raised its expectations of pupils. These adjustments have enabled the school to move forward in a positive direction. Staff and parents appreciate these modifications because pupils' conduct has improved. This has created a positive environment in which pupils can learn.

At the heart of the school's ambitious curriculum are pupils' future prospects. Over time, more pupils have opted to study a modern foreign language. This has increased the take-up of the suite of subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate. The school's curriculum also identifies the knowledge pupils need to thrive and to care for their mental health and well-being. This well-sequenced curriculum fosters skills of tenacity and resilience to support pupils' work with new technologies.

In some lessons, teachers use assessment techniques such as questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding. However, this is not consistent across the school. Furthermore, new learning is too often introduced before pupils have grasped prior knowledge. This means misconceptions and gaps in knowledge linger for longer than they should. Therefore, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.

It is a more positive picture for sixth-form students. Teachers help students to carefully build upon what they already know. For instance, students tackle tough problem-solving tasks independently for extended periods. Additionally, students in English and drama can identify complex themes common to a range of 'period' and historical plays. Over time, this enables them to make important connections across the curriculum.

The school accurately identifies the needs of pupils with SEND. Staff are well informed about the strategies that help these pupils to learn. However, not enough staff use this information effectively. As a result, pupils with SEND do not receive the support they need and fall further behind.

Pupils have frequent opportunities to read. Many choose library books to read for pleasure. Those pupils who are still at the initial stages of learning to read receive structured interventions to help them with their fluency. However, some of these pupils take too long to catch up. This means that they struggle to access the wider curriculum because they do not read and understand key vocabulary in lessons. The school and the trust recognise that there is more work to do here.

Leaders have constructed a personal development curriculum that helps pupils to be thoughtful. The school encourages pupils to pay particular attention to their physical and mental well-being. Many of their lessons focus on the values of self-care and looking out for the needs of others. For example, pupils remember in vivid detail workshops about the dangers of knife crime and how to recognise controlling and toxic relationships. These experiences heighten pupils' alertness to these risks and how to avoid them.

Pupils receive clear, independent advice that guides them to make informed choices about their future. Sixth-form students take full advantage of opportunities to visit universities and careers fairs and listen to guest speakers. This range of experiences prepares them well for their next steps.

School staff value leaders' concern for their well-being and the management of their workload. They feel well supported by the school and the trust. In turn, these staff are approachable to parents and community members. Staff engage with parents about their child's education with careful consideration. Parents appreciate this.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teaching is not as effective as it should be. This is because some teachers do not consider pupils' prior knowledge well enough before introducing new learning in a range of subjects. This holds pupils back because they do not retain key knowledge they need to rely on in future lessons. The school should ensure that teachers use assessment systems effectively to address misconceptions and gaps in pupils' learning across all subjects so that pupils can build on their learning and make good progress.
- Not enough teachers adapt lesson tasks which meet the needs of pupils with SEND. This reduces pupils' confidence and can slow their learning. The school should ensure that every pupil with SEND can access the curriculum and make the progress of which they are capable.
- Some pupils who struggle to read have not received enough support to enable them to decode unfamiliar words and read with fluency. This impedes their ability to access learning in lessons and does not help them to widen their vocabulary. The school should ensure that weaker readers are given the support they need so that they are able to understand more of the curriculum and make better progress.

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 March 2018.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	136032
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10282680
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,090
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	129
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	James Philip Knight
CEO of the trust	Tom Campbell
Headteacher	Jo Paddock
Website	https://northbirminghamacademy.e-act.org.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	6 and 7 March 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the E-ACT multi-academy trust.
- The executive headteacher joined this school in April 2022 as its headteacher.
- The current headteacher took over in September 2023 but started work at the school in July 2022 as the school's senior deputy headteacher.
- The school uses nine registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust and an education director.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the regional executive headteacher and senior leaders.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, performing arts and computer science. In each subject, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders and visited lessons. They spoke with all subject teachers and met with a selection of pupils. They also looked at pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the school's curriculum for reading with leaders and teachers. They met with a selection of pupils who struggle with their reading.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for personal development. Inspectors talked with pupils in key stages 3 and 4. During their discussions, they asked pupils about relationships education, equal opportunities, careers guidance, safety and other matters related to personal development. Inspectors also gathered evidence to evaluate pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents who completed Ofsted Parent View. They also considered responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including records pertaining to self-evaluation and school improvement. They also considered records relating to bullying, behaviour, pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. They took account of a range of curriculum planning documents, including those related to relationships and sex education and health education.

Inspection team

Antony Edkins, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Philip Hamilton	Ofsted Inspector
David Buckle	Ofsted Inspector

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