

Inspection of Maltings Academy

Spinks Lane, Witham, Essex CM8 1EP

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 September, and 31 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

The executive headteacher of this school is Michelle Hughes. This school is part of Academies Enterprise Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Rebecca Boomer-Clark, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Hall.

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 8 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. The school received an urgent inspection under section 8 of the Act on 10 January 2018. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' experiences at Maltings have been affected by an unsettled and turbulent time for the school. Significant staff changes and absence meant that there was little consistency for pupils. This has reduced the overall quality of their experience. Expectations of how well pupils should behave and achieve are not consistently high enough.

Recent changes are starting to make a significant difference. More and more staff are beginning to ask more of pupils. Most pupils are responding well to these rising expectations. Many pupils behave well and attend school regularly. There have been issues with pupils arriving to school and lessons late. However, a focus on this is resulting in significant improvements. More pupils are now on time and following the newly implemented systems to support them to do this.

While some pupils are finding the changes difficult to adjust to, and a small number do not comply, many pupils comment positively that the culture is changing and improvement is happening. Pupils are generally polite to adults and each other. Pupils in lower year groups, who are newer to the school, know and understand the 'Maltings Way'.

Most pupils feel safe and happy in school. While some Year 7 and 8 pupils comment on the behaviour of older pupils, they also acknowledge that plenty is being done to improve this. They can already feel the benefit. For example, pupils now rarely experience unkind language.

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

The school is doing a lot of work to shift their established culture. This will take time, but hearts and minds are beginning to change. Parents attending 'listening events' talk positively of the work of the school. Leaders work closely with staff, pupils and parents to highlight the impact of their work on pupils' school experience.

Where the curriculum is working well, it builds on what pupils already know and consequently, pupils progress well. Inconsistency in teaching as a result of staff absence has led to some pupils in key stage 4 having gaps in their knowledge in some subjects. In other subjects, the curriculum has been regularly reviewed and additional curriculum time provided to pupils. This has helped staff to identify the knowledge pupils need to know as a priority.

Reading is considered a priority for all pupils to be able to access the curriculum. The planning of the reading curriculum is in its early stages. However, pupils who struggle to read are identified swiftly. They are supported to ensure they have the reading knowledge to successfully access all other subjects.

Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) meets their basic needs and is improving. There is no narrowing of the curriculum for this

group of pupils. Teachers have access to accurate information to enable them to adapt lessons and learning resources where this is needed. This helps pupils with SEND successfully access the same curriculum as their peers.

Behaviour throughout the school is improving. This is because pupils increasingly understand what is expected of them. The school now has clear and well-communicated policies to improve behaviour. These policies help pupils to conduct themselves properly, for example, by reducing the use of mobile phones. Where the policies are applied rigorously, pupils respond positively. However, there are still instances of low-level behaviour that are not always challenged effectively. The number of pupils suspended over the past 12 months is high. While this is the case, the strategy to reduce poor behaviour is working. Suspensions have fallen. Where serious incidents arise, these are investigated effectively.

Pupils attend school regularly and instances of lateness are falling. Punctuality was an issue previously, but the school is taking effective action to address this. As a result, far fewer lessons are being disturbed by lateness.

A new curriculum for personal development has been implemented. This has been considered carefully to ensure it meets the needs of the pupils. As part of this programme, pupils learn how to make healthy lifestyle choices and understand the risks associated with alcohol and drugs.

The school has worked hard to ensure the experience and achievement of pupils improves. The school acknowledges that the parent community needs reassurance that improvement will happen. This is a priority for the executive headteacher. 'Listening events' for parents have taken place for the school to hear and understand parental concerns. Many of these issues relate to historic challenges. Staff recognise, overwhelmingly, that positive changes are beginning to bring about improvements. They feel well supported when managing behaviour and have been given comprehensive training to build their confidence and skills.

Leaders at all levels are tenacious in their approach to school improvement. Leaders, including the trust, recognise the significant turbulence that has impacted on the education of their pupils. They have done a lot, but know there is a lot more work to do to ensure pupils, staff and the parents 'buy into' and believe in 'the Maltings Way'. A key priority for leaders has been to significantly increase the expectations for pupils and train staff to be able to apply these consistently. The school has been identified by the trust as a high priority. As such, additional resources are on hand to support leaders to secure sustainable school improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Historic inconsistencies in the culture of behaviour mean that some pupils do not meet the high expectations of staff. As a result, the school is not always a calm and orderly environment. The school must ensure that pupils know and understand the standards expected of them so that behaviour continues to improve.
- In key stage 4, some pupils have significant gaps in their knowledge because of both high staff turnover and disruption to lessons over time. As a result, some pupils are unable to remember key vocabulary or course content from their subjects. Leaders should ensure that pupils are supported to catch up and keep up with their peers in order for them to achieve their potential.
- While leaders are making rapid progress to improve the culture and ethos of the school, there is still work to do to ensure parents are aware of, and understand, the extent of the improvements being made. The school should ensure they continue to provide parents with ongoing opportunities to engage in the life of the school.

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	135653
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10265607
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	893
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Hall
Headteacher	Michelle Hughes
Website	www.maltingsacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	10 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Academies Enterprise Trust.
- The school has undergone substantial changes in leadership and staffing since the previous inspection.
- The school uses two unregistered 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

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school 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.
- Inspectors initially inspected the school on 19 and 20 of September. Following a review of the evidence, and in line with Ofsted's published procedures, inspectors returned to the school on 31 October to gather additional evidence.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, history, mathematics, science and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- The inspection team met with pupils from different year groups to talk about their learning and experiences at school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents provided by the school. These included the school improvement plan, curriculum documentation and school policies.
- Inspectors considered 196 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View. This included 164 comments from parents and carers in the free-text facility. Inspectors also considered the 44 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Jonathan Rockey, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sally Nutman	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Sutton	Ofsted Inspector
Aimee Bray	Ofsted Inspector
Tracy Fielding	His Majesty's Inspector

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