

Inspection of Grace Academy Coventry

Wigston Road, Coventry, West Midlands CV2 2RH

Inspection dates: 30 and 31 January 2024

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

The principal of this school is Natasha Whiles. This school is part of Tove Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Dr Jamie Clarke, and overseen by the board of trustees, chaired by Christopher Watt.

What is it like to attend this school?

Grace Academy Coventry staff and pupils share the same high aspirations. Pupils understand and follow 'The Grace Way', which includes the values of 'limitless potential' and 'mutual respect'. Relationships between pupils and staff are courteous and respectful. Pupils are happy and safe. A parent's comment, typical of those of others, was, 'Grace Academy is a beautiful school that teaches more than academics. They have a way of teaching the children empathy for others.'

There is a purposeful atmosphere around the school. Pupils can focus on their learning well. Pupils work hard and want to learn. Teachers speak calmly with any pupil who loses concentration and offer support to help them regain focus. Pupils' very positive attitudes, along with the well-thought-out curriculum, enable pupils to achieve well by the time they leave school.

The school places an exceptionally strong emphasis on pupils' personal development. The school 'puts its arm around the community' to celebrate and support pupils inside and outside school. Pupils can explain clearly their understanding of fundamental British values, such as democracy. Pupil leadership opportunities include mental health and anti-bullying ambassadors. The extra-curricular programme is rich and diverse. Pupils regularly take part in a range of activities, such as journalism and spoken-word clubs.

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

There have been significant and highly effective staffing changes since the previous inspection. These include changes to staff in senior, subject and pastoral leadership roles. The school has successfully raised expectations around learning and behaviour. The school has developed a highly ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum. All pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), follow this curriculum. The school's actions to improve the curriculum have led to improving pupil outcomes by the end of key stage 4.

Students in the sixth form are positive about their learning experiences and the wider opportunities the school provides. Sixth-form teachers engage students in ambitious, challenging and independent learning. This enables students to achieve well. Students make a significant contribution to supporting younger pupils, for example by acting as mentors.

Curriculum leaders identify the most important information that pupils need to learn to build their future knowledge. For example, Year 7 pupils in English use their knowledge of key poetry features to discuss how a reader might feel about a poem and what the poet's reasons are for writing the poem. Teachers check what pupils know and ensure well that pupils understand what they have to do. However, some pupils, including pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils, have gaps in their learning due to absence. This means that some pupils do not always understand how their current learning connects with previous work.

Staff know and teach their subjects well. This enables pupils to gain and remember new knowledge successfully. However, some pupils feel that homework tasks are not always given consistently across different subjects. Pupils are not always clear about whether homework is solely for revision purposes or to develop their current and previous learning more deeply.

The school quickly identifies pupils with SEND. 'Pupil passports' provide precise information for staff about pupils' individual needs. Teachers use this information effectively to adapt their teaching. The school has implemented an extensive range of strategies to support pupils who are not confident readers. These include the use of specialist teachers, who rapidly address weaknesses in phonics, grammar and comprehension. The school ensures that pupils who need reading support receive it rapidly. This includes a carefully planned programme for pupils who speak English as an additional language and pupils who join the school at different points across the year.

The school has an extremely well-planned programme of personal, social, health and economic education. Pupils learn about topics such as healthy relationships and online safety effectively. Pupils also speak positively about how the school educates them about cultures and diversity. Pupils and students in the sixth form discuss careers, university aspirations and apprenticeships. This prepares them very well for the next stage of their lives.

The school encourages pupils to raise money for local charities, as well as collecting and distributing hampers and food parcels to the immediate community. This develops a very strong and effective social awareness among pupils.

Trustees and governors know the school very well. They support and challenge appropriately in meetings and on their visits to the school. They hold the school to account well for all aspects of provision, including safeguarding and the quality of SEND provision. The school has implemented a well-thought-out, professional development programme for staff. Staff workload is carefully considered, which staff appreciate.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils have gaps in their learning due to being absent from school. This holds back their progress and achievement. The school should work with parents and carers and external agencies to secure more regular attendance for all pupils and ensure that missing work is completed rapidly.

- Pupils do not always understand the purpose of homework tasks and do not learn consistently from them. The school should ensure that pupils understand and receive regular and consistent opportunities to complete and learn from homework tasks, in line with the school's expectations.

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	135335
Local authority	Coventry
Inspection number	10290582
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	993
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	55
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Christopher Watt
CEO of trust	Dr Jamie Clarke
Principal	Natasha Whiles
Website	www.graceacademy.org.uk/coventry
Dates of previous inspection	17 and 18 December 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Tove Learning Trust, which contains 14 schools.
- The school makes use of one alternative provider.
- 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 had 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 focused on the following deep dives: English, science, history, drama, and health and social care. Inspectors looked at leaders' curriculum planning, visited lessons, heard pupils read to a familiar adult, looked at pupils' work and talked with pupils about their learning. Inspectors also looked at the curriculum in other subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents. These included information about pupils' behaviour and attendance, and the school's curriculum and improvement planning. The school's website was also checked.
- 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.
- Inspectors observed informal times of the day as part of their evaluation of safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors held meetings with the chair of the trust, the chair of the local governing board, the director of education, the principal and other senior leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, administrative staff and pupils. Inspectors also talked informally to pupils, staff and parents to gather information about school life.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

Stuart Clarkson, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Graeme Rudland	Ofsted Inspector
Josie Leese	Ofsted Inspector
Patrick Amieli	Ofsted Inspector

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