

# Inspection of Paxman Academy

Paxman Avenue, Colchester, Essex CO2 9DB

---

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 February 2024

<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

The executive headteacher of this school is Fiona Pierson. She is responsible for this school and one other. This school is part of The Sigma Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Lyn Wright, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sue Hammond.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils enjoy attending this school as there is so much to see and do. They chat happily about the many trips, visiting speakers and theatre companies, and clubs that are on offer. Pupils set up their own clubs to follow their interests, such as Rubik's Cube and Warhammer, and then invite others along to join in. It is a vibrant community where many undertake leadership roles. Pupils are eager to run events, fundraise for charity and mentor those who would like a little bit of support or help with their studies.

The school has a caring ethos. Military families benefit from community events held by the school, such as cinema evenings and inflatables afternoons. Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds cook on Fridays to take a family meal home. In such ways, pupils are developing altruism and an understanding of what it means to be a good citizen.

Pupils follow an ambitious curriculum. Most want to do well in their lessons and behave accordingly. Year 11 pupils are feeling the pressure of being the first cohort through the school to sit national exams. They are coping well with this, being in receipt of helpful mental health support and guidance.

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

In its first few years of operation, the curriculum has changed as the school has grown in size. The school has an expanding vocational offer. The broad curriculum also includes subjects that form the English Baccalaureate. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) follow the same curriculum as their peers. Occasionally, some pupils follow a more bespoke route which may include alternative provision.

The curriculum is well planned. Staff pay careful attention to what pupils know and can do. They make sure that pupils' learning builds on what they have learned before. Where pupils are hesitant in what they understand, teachers explain concepts clearly and in simple steps. This develops pupils' confidence and motivates them to learn more.

The school has a well-considered programme for supporting pupils who are not yet fluent readers. Staff precisely identify pupils' gaps, and they target support accordingly. The reading interventions that pupils receive are having impact. Most pupils experience success and have confidence with reading. The school has a variety of strategies to keep pupils positive about reading.

Support for pupils with SEND is stronger with the appointment of more people to the SEND and pastoral teams. They have effective procedures for identifying and responding effectively to pupils' changing needs. The trust has run extensive training for staff. Hence, they are supporting pupils in lessons remarkably well. Staff give

careful consideration as to when pupils require further support or when they need to move on to more challenging work.

Issues with temporary staffing in certain subjects, such as science, has led to some challenges with pupils' behaviour. The trust has taken steps to address this through significant investment in staff. Low-level disruption in classrooms is now rare and dealt with effectively so that the learning of others is not interrupted. There remains a small number of pupils who struggle to behave positively in lessons or sometimes when they move around school.

Pupils' wider development is a priority for the school. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is comprehensive. Pupils learn a full range of important topics thoroughly. This includes an age-appropriate understanding of consent in relationships and how to be safe online. Pupils benefit from a wide-ranging careers programme. Pupils receive impartial careers advice. They have opportunities to engage with employers and training providers. This helps pupils to have high aspirations and make informed decisions about their future.

Trustees have strong oversight of the school. They are highly effective, ensuring that the school continues to drive forward its improvements. They have a sharp focus on equalities so that the school is an inclusive place for everyone. Staff feel looked after and valued by trustees and leaders.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- The culture of respect and acting with integrity is developing as the school grows in size. On occasion, a small number of pupils are not making the right choices for their behaviour, such as when they are taught by someone who is not their normal teacher. This then disrupts the learning of others. The school should ensure that the key values delivered through the Paxman Aspire curriculum are understood by pupils, so they can be the best version of themselves regardless of the situation or who they are with.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	147080
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10295107
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	902
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Sue Hammond
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Lyn Wright
<b>Headteacher</b>	Fiona Pierson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.paxmanacademy.school">www.paxmanacademy.school</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Paxman Academy is a new school which opened in September 2019. It is part of The Sigma Trust.
- The executive headteacher has been in post since the school opened. The current head of school joined in January 2023.
- This is the first academic year where the school is full. The school will have its first set of national exam results in 2024.
- The school has a high proportion of pupils with SEND.
- The school uses nine providers of alternative provision. Two are registered.
- 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 has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the trust, the chief executive officer of the trust and representatives of the local governing committee.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and staff.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders at alternative provision and a sample of parents whose children are educated off site. Inspectors also spoke with some pupils who attend alternative provision.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, design technology and religious education (RE). 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.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum in some other subjects, including PSHE and relationships and sex education.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around school and at social times. They considered pupils' views about behaviour in school. They also spoke with staff about pupils' behaviour and staff's workload and well-being.
- 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 considered responses to Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys. They considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments.

## Inspection team

Liz Smith, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sue Smith	Ofsted Inspector
David Piercy	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Fowler	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2024