

# Inspection of a good school: The Friary School

Eastern Avenue, Lichfield, Staffordshire WS13 7EW

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Inspection dates:

19 and 20 March 2024

## Outcome

The Friary School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Matt Allman. The school is part of Primitas Learning Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Mark Maydew, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jason Marsden.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at The Friary School, and it is easy to see why. A culture of high expectations permeates throughout, and pupils rise to this high bar willingly. Staff work tirelessly to prepare pupils for their examinations. This ensures that pupils achieve extremely well and are confident young adults who are ready for their next steps in education, employment or training.

Pupils' behaviour and conduct are excellent. In lessons, pupils work diligently and complete work to a high standard. There are many clubs that pupils can participate in both during and after school. These include creative writing, reading, music, chess, drama and lots more. The house system places a key role in school life and pupils enjoy the different ways they can contribute to this, such as through sports, debating and current affairs competitions as well as raising money for charity.

The curriculum offers a broad range of subjects for pupils to study. In both key stages 4 and 5, the school offers different qualifications that appeal to pupils' talents and interests. In many of these areas, pupils make very strong progress.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. One parent, in response to Ofsted's survey, summed up the views of many: 'This is a great school. My children are very happy here and teachers go above and beyond for pupils. It has very strong leadership.'

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

The school's curriculum is highly ambitious. Careful thought has been given as to how topics are sequenced so that knowledge and skills build over time. Leaders have also considered what smaller blocks of knowledge pupils need to know and remember to complete more challenging tasks. In English, for example, leaders have deliberately set out the key knowledge pupils should learn in Year 7 when looking at the openings to plays by Shakespeare. This is then built on in subsequent years, when pupils study full play texts such as 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'The Tempest'. As a result, pupils in English, as well as in many other subjects, make strong progress.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and use it skilfully in lessons to help pupils understand their learning. Teachers model tasks effectively to show pupils how to complete activities including extended pieces of writing, analysing sources and how to answer examination questions. Pupils benefit from the feedback they receive in lessons about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. However, in some instances, the curriculum can be too focused on what pupils need to do in their examinations. This can limit pupils' learning experiences.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported extremely well. There are clear procedures in place to identify pupils' needs and review learning plans. Staff use information provided by the school to adapt tasks and provide targeted support where needed. Pupils with SEND are fully integrated into school life and make strong progress from their starting points.

The school has ensured that those who require support with their reading get the right help. Leaders swiftly identify those who struggle with reading when they join the school and put in place a targeted programme of support. As a result, pupils with weak reading skills make good progress and are helped to catch up.

The wider development of pupils is exceptionally strong. A comprehensive personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum is in place, which is delivered through form times, assemblies and off-timetable days. Pupils have a very secure knowledge of key topics such as how to stay safe online and healthy relationships, including consent and coercive control. Pupils also enjoy the many different guest speakers who visit the school to talk with them, such as local district councillors, members of the police and those representing Holocaust awareness.

The school's careers programme is rich and varied. This is carefully woven into the PSHE curriculum so that pupils learn about the world of work and their potential next steps. Pupils enjoy finding out about apprenticeships and the many different career paths available to them. Students in the sixth form undertake work experience and are given many opportunities to learn about different university courses and other pathways.

There is a plethora of opportunities for pupils to extend their learning beyond the classroom. There are several different trips that take place each year, including to Warwick Castle, the Peak District, Normandy and Paris. The school stages many popular musical shows, including 'The Sound of Music' and, more recently, 'Encore on the Move',

in which many pupils take part. The 'Summer Sizzler' festival, which is a particular favourite, takes place at the end of the academic year for the school community to enjoy together.

The local governing body members have a strong understanding of the school. They provide effective challenge and support to school leaders. Trust leaders engage well with the school and recognise its many strengths. Staff are unanimously proud to work at the school and appreciate the support they receive with their workload.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- In a small number of areas, there is an overemphasis on what pupils need to be able to do by the end of Year 11. This means that, on occasion, in the design and implementation of the curriculum lower down the school, leaders have placed too much weight on what pupils need for their end of key stage 4 examinations. The school should look to evolve its curriculum to ensure that staff focus on what younger pupils need to know, understand and do for their particular point of learning.

## **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 predecessor school, The Friary School, to be good in March 2014.

## **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>	146907
<b>Local authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10294647
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,226
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	179
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Jason Marsden
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Mark Maydew
<b>Headteacher</b>	Matt Allman
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.friaryschool.co.uk">www.friaryschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school joined Primitas Learning Partnership multi-academy trust in September 2023. The trust is made up of four primary schools, two secondary schools and one special school.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- 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 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 met with the chair of the trust and three members of the local governing body. Meetings were also held with the chief executive officer, the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and pupils. They also talked informally to pupils and staff to gather general information about school life.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history 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. They also looked at other subjects to check how they are planned and taught.
- 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 reviewed a range of school documents. These included information about behaviour, attendance, the school curriculum and improvement planning. The school website was also checked.
- Inspectors observed informal times of the day to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the free-text comments. They also considered responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Mark Howes, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sarah Godden

Ofsted Inspector

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