

Inspection of a good school: Firth Park Academy

Fircroft Avenue, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S5 0SD

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 April 2024

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 acting principal of this school is Elizabeth Cartledge. 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. There is also a regional education director, Zoe Bidmead, who is responsible for this school and two others.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils have mixed views about this school. Pupils are adjusting to new behavioural expectations. Some pupils do not enjoy school and do not have positive relationships with teachers. Some pupils do not attend regularly and some pupils are suspended frequently.

Pupils are taught a suitable range of subjects. Pupils remember what they have been taught but some pupils have gaps in their knowledge, which mainly occur at key stage 3. The school does not address these gaps consistently. Most pupils make progress through the curriculum, including those who are disadvantaged. Some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not supported well in lessons.

Pupils have access to a wide variety of clubs and activities. These include football, climbing, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, arts and crafts, and choir. Pupils accrue Children's University credits as a result of attending these clubs. The school ensures that the diverse ethnicities of pupils are celebrated through events such as culture day and optional fasting during Ramadan.

The school teaches pupils to keep themselves safe, including from the dangers of knife crime, railway tracks and water. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online.

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

The school provides a broad curriculum which enables pupils to access future employment, education or training opportunities. Most subjects have a well-planned curriculum which develops pupils' knowledge and skills over time. In some subjects, the curriculum is being redesigned to address gaps in content. Gaps in pupils' knowledge are not clearly tracked or addressed consistently. This is particularly evident in key stage 3.

Teachers have thorough subject knowledge. The school has recently introduced several new teaching strategies to improve pupils' learning. These include knowledge retrieval tasks at the start of lessons and 'turn and talk' activities to encourage discussion. The school recognises that, although these show promise, they are not used across lessons consistently. Pupils with SEND are identified and suitable support strategies to support their learning are identified. These strategies are not acted on in some lessons.

Most pupils acquire the knowledge and skills outlined in the subjects which have a well-planned curriculum. These pupils articulate what they have learned and why it is of importance. Some pupil groups, such as those with SEND, do not make the progress they are capable of making. The school is aware that the provision for pupils with SEND needs to improve and has begun to implement improvement strategies. The school has prioritised support for weaker readers. Pupils who find reading difficult are quickly identified and supported with appropriate interventions. Pupils develop a love of reading through a variety of experiences such as reading clubs and reading assemblies.

The school has recently raised the staff's and pupils' expectations of behaviour. This has improved pupils' behaviour and has resulted in a large number of suspensions. The school's new 'Horizon' provision to support pupils with social and emotional needs is beginning to reduce the number of suspensions. Most pupils in lessons behave in a calm manner. Most move around the school site sensibly. A minority of pupils do not manage their behaviour well once they are not directly supervised.

Too many pupils do not attend school regularly. The school tracks pupils' attendance thoroughly and analyses attendance data constantly. Although the school's strategies to improve pupils' irregular attendance are beginning to work, too many pupils miss too much vital learning.

The school provides a suitable programme of personal development. Pupils learn about topics that are pertinent to their age such as healthy relationships, managing emotions and contraception. Pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain and learn about the protected characteristics and world faiths. Pupils experience a comprehensive careers programme that includes work experience, mock interviews, university visits and 'what employers want' workshops.

The school has had new leadership at all levels since the beginning of this academic year. The school is effectively supporting new leaders with professional development. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas that require further development. Staff feel well supported by leaders. Staff experience a workload that is manageable and have a healthy work-life balance. The trust's leaders have prioritised the

areas that require further improvement at the school and are providing appropriate resources and support.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The quality of education is variable across the curriculum. This includes provision for pupils with SEND. Pupils' outcomes are not consistently strong. The school should ensure that the quality of education is consistent across the curriculum and in both key stages, and that it prevents gaps in pupils' learning and addresses any that occur.
- Some pupils do not display positive attitudes to learning. As a result, they are suspended frequently and miss vital learning. The school needs to ensure that pupils' attitudes to learning are developed and that the number of suspensions is significantly reduced.
- Some pupils do not attend school regularly. As a result, they miss too much learning. The school needs to ensure that attendance of all pupils improves.
- Many leaders are new to their roles. They have limited experience to guide improvements. The trust should continue to develop leaders at all levels so they can lead further school improvement effectively.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in 2015.

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	139334
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	10323046
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,209
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Hall
Principal	Elizabeth Cartledge (Acting Principal)
Website	www.firthparkacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	6 February 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Firth Park Academy joined Academies Enterprise Trust in August 2013.
- The school is one of 57 schools in the trust.
- The school uses eight unregistered alternative providers of education.
- The school has introduced an in-house provision, called 'Horizons', which supports pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Since the beginning of this academic year, there have been widespread changes in leadership. The school currently has an acting principal and several senior and middle leaders who are new to their roles.
- 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 acting principal, other leaders, staff and pupils. They met with the regional education director, a delegate representative of the trust's governance. They met with the director of education, a delegate representative of the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: physical education, English, history and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors visited the internal provision for pupils with SEND. Inspectors visited lessons and considered how the needs of disadvantaged and pupils with SEND are met. They observed pupils at various times of the school day.
- Inspectors spoke to representatives from a sample of three of the alternative provisions used by the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; considered the views of parents; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

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