

Inspection of Atam Academy

Little Heath, Romford, Essex, RM6 4XX

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 June 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The principal of this school is Chris Steed. This school is part of Khalsa Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Anita Notta, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Shaminder Rayatt.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Atam Academy have positive, committed attitudes to their learning. The school's curriculum is ambitious for all, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils work hard and typically achieve well, including in national assessments.

The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Children settle quickly into established routines in early years and cooperate well. Across the school, there is an orderly environment for learning. Pupils are respectful and reflective. The school takes action to ensure that pupils are safe. For example, pupils learn about the importance of being aware of the risks when online. There are few incidences of bullying. Pupils know how to report any worries they may have. Staff resolve any such concerns swiftly.

Pupils understand the importance of the school's values. They enjoy learning about Sikhism and celebrating festivals such as Vaisakhi, as well as being taught about other religions and perspectives.

The school offers a rich range of additional activities and visits, across the primary and secondary phases. Pupils have opportunities to attend a range of clubs, as well as visiting local places of interest, such as temples and museums.

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

Since the previous inspection, leaders have introduced a broad and more ambitious curriculum, that matches the scope of what is expected nationally. The knowledge pupils are expected to learn and remember is clearly defined and well-sequenced from early years to Year 11. Across most subjects this enables pupils to build and consolidate their knowledge and understanding as they move through the school, so that they achieve well.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. They value the opportunities that the school provides to develop their professional practice and to learn from others. For example, secondary subject specialists provide effective support to staff in the primary phase, to strengthen their subject-specific knowledge. Most teachers explain ideas and concepts clearly, matching activities well to intended outcomes. They typically identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and revisit learning to secure pupils' understanding.

In a few subjects, the curriculum is not implemented consistently. In these instances, teachers do not check carefully enough whether pupils have secured the knowledge they need, before moving on. This means that pupils are not always able to remember and apply their prior learning with confidence.

The school has placed high priority on the importance of reading, right from the start in early years. In Nursery, children begin to develop their vocabulary through

joining in with familiar songs and stories. From the Reception year, children follow a structured phonics programme which helps them to become fluent, confident readers. Staff have received effective training and teach with precision. They use assessment well, to identify any pupil who may be falling behind, providing support to ensure that they catch up. The school promotes a love of reading throughout the school. For example, pupils visit the library regularly and enjoy reading and engaging with high quality texts in class.

Pupils behave well in classrooms around the school. They are courteous to visitors and to each other. Pupils attend well. Staff take swift and decisive action if a pattern of concern is identified. The school works closely with a range of external agencies to support pupils' well-being.

Staff identify the needs of pupils with SEND and put support in place to ensure that these pupils access the full curriculum. Records of behaviour, attendance, progress and welfare are well-organised and enable staff to provide extra support to pupils when it is needed.

The school has a well-planned and extensive personal development programme. This is underpinned by the school's Sikh values, which include resilience, love and compassion. Pupils are encouraged to discuss and debate ideas and perspectives. They are interested in difference and diversity, recognising and exploring different beliefs, for example. The school offers a range of clubs and activities designed to develop talents and interests. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, participate actively in sports, arts and cultural clubs and visits.

The school has recently been through a period of turbulence, which has unsettled a number of parents and staff. While the school has communicated with parents and worked with relevant agencies, there is more to do to rebuild trust with all members of the school community. Most staff feel well supported, and value the school's 'open door' policy. The majority of parents would recommend the school, though some have concerns, including in relation to communication and changes in staffing.

Governors are well-informed and understand their statutory duties. They draw on a range of information to maintain a clear strategic oversight of the school, holding leaders to account for ongoing improvement. They understand that there is more to do to ensure that the positive improvements that have taken place since the last inspection continue. This includes on-going work with the school community through strengthened communication.

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 few subjects, and aspects of early years, the curriculum is at an earlier stage of design and implementation. In these instances, the tasks and activities chosen do not always match the ambition of the planned curriculum. Similarly, assessment is not used consistently to check and address misconceptions before moving onto the next aspect of learning. This means that some pupils do not secure the knowledge they need as securely. The school should ensure that that staff have suitable training to implement the curriculum effectively, regularly checking the impact of actions taken.
- Some parents have concerns about the school, following a recent period of turbulence. The school should strengthen their communication with parents, to continue building trust and engagement.

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	142896
Local authority	Redbridge
Inspection number	10323422
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	3 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1055
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Shaminder Rayatt
Principal	Chris Steed
Website	www.khalsaacademiestrust.com
Dates of previous inspection	4 and 5 May 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a Sikh religious character. The school had its last section 48 inspection carried out by the Network of Sikh Organisations in June 2019.
- The school has expanded since the previous inspection. The school now has pupils in every year group from Nursery to Year 11. The school sixth form opens in September 2024.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision for pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause for pupils in Years 8 and 9 who are covered by the clause. The Baker Clause requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information 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 second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with the principal, and other senior leaders. Inspectors met with trustees, local governors, the chief executive officer of the Khalsa Academies Trust and representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, modern foreign languages, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons and spoke with teachers. The inspectors spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work.
- The curriculum in other subjects was also considered as part of the inspection.
- 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 gathered the views of pupils, parents and carers, and staff through both discussion and their responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Russell Bennett, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Barry Blakelock	Ofsted Inspector
Una Buckley	His Majesty's Inspector
Yvonne Chisholm	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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