

Inspection of a good school: Dukessgate Academy

Earlesdon Crescent, Little Hulton, Salford, Greater Manchester M38 9HF

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 June 2024

Outcome

Dukessgate Academy continues to be a good school.

The principal of this school is Amanda Eldridge. This school is part of the United 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 (CEO), Sir Jon Coles, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Dame Reena Keeble.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending Dukessgate Academy. They value the warm and caring relationships that they have with staff and with each other. Most pupils behave well and listen to their teachers. They look forward to their learning each day.

A very small number of pupils said that they have been bullied in the past. However, the school's records show that it takes swift and effective action to sort out any incidents of repeatedly unkind words or behaviour. Pupils reported that they feel safe and happy in school. They agreed that many improvements have been made to the school in recent years.

The school wants the best for pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It expects pupils to do well academically. In the main, pupils rise to these expectations and make the progress that the school expects across different curriculum subjects.

Pupils enjoy making a contribution to school life. For instance, they carry out their roles as subject and school ambassadors and play leaders with diligence and pride. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about representing the school in various events, for example reading aloud the stories that they have written as part of a trust-wide writing competition.

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

The trust has supported the school to design a curriculum that is ambitious and introduces pupils to new knowledge in small, logical steps from the beginning of the early years to the end of Year 6. Most staff feel that the curriculum information that they

receive helps them to manage their workload. It also enables staff to develop their subject-specific knowledge well. Staff teach the curriculum with confidence and expertise. They use assessment information effectively to check if pupils have understood the subject content that has been taught. Staff address misconceptions or gaps in pupils' learning swiftly.

The 2023 published data shows that by the end of Year 6, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics was significantly below that of their peers nationally. However, the school has analysed the reasons for the end of key stage data. It has taken effective steps to address these weaknesses. For example, the school has focused on improving pupils' rapid recall of multiplication facts in mathematics and increasing pupils' stamina and fluency in reading. Pupils now have more opportunities to practise and improve their writing knowledge than they did in the past. Current pupils learn well. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The school has recently strengthened its systems for identifying and meeting the additional needs of pupils with SEND. However, some of the changes are fairly new. This means that some pupils have not benefited fully from the targeted support that is available in class until recently. Parents and carers have mostly welcomed these changes.

The school prioritises the teaching of reading. Pupils enjoy listening to a range of books and stories. The school's early reading programme supports children in the early years, and pupils in key stage 1, to read books that are well matched to the sounds that they know with increasing confidence and fluency.

The proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was lower than the national average in the most recently published data. However, many pupils are new to the school and/or are new to learning English as an additional language. The school has provided these pupils, and any other pupils who find reading difficult, with highly effective support so that they are rapidly catching up with their peers. Current pupils progress well through the reading curriculum. Older pupils read with expression and enthusiasm. They enjoyed talking about their favourite books and authors. They value their roles as reading ambassadors.

The school has recently introduced a very well-thought-out behaviour system. The large majority of pupils and staff, who spoke to the inspector, believe that the new policy is having a positive impact. The school is now a calm haven for pupils. However, these improvements are quite new. On occasions, a few pupils struggle to follow the school's behaviour expectations. A small minority of parents, who shared their views, do not believe that the school has tackled incidents of poor behaviour well enough.

A key priority for the school has been to improve historically low attendance rates. The school has successfully pinpointed the reasons why some pupils struggled to attend school. They have used this information effectively to provide targeted support to pupils and their families, well supported by a wealth of external partners. Pupils' rates of attendance are now much improved.

The school has developed an effective programme to support pupils' wider development. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and lifestyles. They spoke knowledgeably about fundamental British values such as democracy and the rule of law. Pupils are also provided with opportunities to develop their interests and talents, particularly sporting ones.

Trustees and members of the local governing body have an accurate view of the school's key strengths and the next steps for further improvement. They have managed recent turbulence in staffing very effectively. This has enabled the school to continue to make many improvements in a relatively short time. The vast majority of staff feel that the school supports their well-being effectively and they are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are some inconsistencies in how well pupils with SEND are supported. This means that some pupils with SEND do not learn as well as they could. The school should ensure that its new systems for identifying and supporting pupils with SEND are fully developed so that pupils across the school are well supported and parents are assured that the school's provision for pupils with SEND is of the highest quality.
- Some pupils sometimes find it difficult to manage their behaviour effectively. This means that, on occasions, they struggle to follow the school's high expectations for their behaviour. The school should ensure that the gains in standards of behaviour are well embedded across the school and that parents are confident in the school's ability to manage behaviour 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 June 2013.

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	138416
Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	10321434
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	224
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Dame Reena Keeble
Principal	Amanda Eldridge
CEO of the trust	Sir Jon Coles
Website	www.dukesgateacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 February 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of any alternative providers.
- The school offers a before-school breakfast club.
- A new principal has been appointed since the previous inspection.

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 that the school has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken this into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, she met with leaders, discussed curriculums, visited a sample of lessons, met with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and reviewed

samples of pupils' work. She also observed pupils from Years 1 to 3 reading to a familiar adult.

- The inspector considered other subjects on the school's curriculum. She talked to the leaders of these subjects. The inspector spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work in these subjects.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, other leaders and staff.
- The inspector met with governors, including the chair of the governing body. She spoke with the chair of the trustees and the regional director. She also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector spoke with different groups of pupils to gather their views of the school and held discussions about their behaviour and learning. She also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at playtime.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. She also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector 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.
- The inspector met with those responsible for safeguarding at the school. She scrutinised a range of documentation in relation to safeguarding. She also spoke with governors, staff, parents and pupils about safeguarding.
- The inspector considered a range of documentation provided by school leaders and staff. This included the school's priority action plan, minutes of governing body meetings and the school's self-evaluation document.

Inspection team

Louise McArdle, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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