

Inspection of Copley Academy

Huddersfield Road, Stalybridge, Cheshire SK15 3RR

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
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Ruth Craven. The school is part of the Great Academies Education 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), Brendan Loughran, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Paul Jones.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils are proud to be part of this friendly school community. They enjoy strong relationships with their teachers and other staff. Pupils know who to speak to if they are worried or upset.

The school is ambitious for pupils to succeed. Pupils are benefiting from the positive changes that the school has made to the quality of education that it provides. As a result of improvements to the design and delivery of the curriculum, pupils, including those with special educational needs/disabilities (SEND), are achieving well across a range of subjects.

Pupils know how they are expected to behave. They move around the corridors calmly and respect the school's one-way system. In lessons, they listen carefully to their teachers and to each other.

The school provides a wide range of opportunities to promote pupils' personal development. Pupils are encouraged to be independent as learners. Pupils, including those with SEND, benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including many trips to places abroad and closer to home.

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

The school, with the support of the trust, has overseen a number of improvements to the curriculum in recent years. This has resulted in positive changes to the overall curriculum offer. The key stage 3 curriculum is broad and ambitious for all pupils, including those with SEND. The school has raised the aspirations of pupils in key stage 4. This means that the proportion of pupils studying the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects is increasing. Furthermore, the school has broadened the range of vocational subjects available, allowing more pupils to pursue their particular career-related interests.

The 2023 published data indicates that pupils' progress and attainment at the end of key stage 4 was significantly below the national average. This was due to a legacy of uneven curriculum delivery in the past, poor rates of attendance and a considerable number of pupils joining the school at different times of the year. These factors have been mostly resolved, which means that current pupils are achieving far better than has been the case previously.

The quality of education on offer for current pupils is considerably stronger than it was in the past. This is because the school has designed subject curriculums that allow pupils to build their knowledge in a logical way. Each subject curriculum sets out clearly for staff the essential knowledge that pupils need to learn. The school's checks on the delivery and impact of the curriculum are well developed. As a result, teachers receive the support and guidance that they need to deliver the subject curriculum with confidence and expertise.

Typically, teachers have strong subject knowledge. They provide clear explanations and ask probing questions of their pupils. However, in a few subjects, teachers sometimes do not choose the most appropriate methods to help pupils to understand key knowledge. Occasionally, teachers do not check carefully that pupils understand what they have learned before introducing new learning. As a result, some pupils develop gaps in their learning. They struggle to recall what has been taught. This prevents them from achieving as well as they should in those subjects.

The school identifies pupils with SEND accurately. It has provided teachers with suitable information and training on how to support pupils with SEND in the classroom. Consequently, pupils with SEND learn well. Most pupils with SEND progress successfully through the same ambitious subject curriculums as their peers.

The school has effective systems to identify pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge. These systems enable leaders to pinpoint and remedy the specific problems that individual pupils face with reading. Most pupils become more confident readers over time. In key stage 4, there are some pupils who continue to struggle with reading. This is because, in the past, their barriers to reading were not identified and addressed quickly enough. Recent actions mean that these pupils are receiving the support that they need. This is beginning to help these pupils to catch up.

Typically, pupils behave well. The school has established clear routines which are understood by pupils and staff. Pupils enjoy socialising with each other at breaktimes and lunchtimes. However, a small proportion of pupils in each year group do not behave as well as they should. This causes disruption in some lessons and around the school. However, the school, with the support of the trust, has been creative in seeking ways to address this issue. This has led to a reduction in the proportion of pupils who are suspended from school.

The school has appropriate processes in place for addressing any concerns about pupils' attendance. This information is used well to understand the causes of pupils' absence. The school works thoughtfully with many pupils and their families to improve pupils' rates of attendance. However, these strategies are not effective for a small minority of pupils. As a result, those pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should and, consequently, do not achieve well.

Pupils learn about a wide range of issues in modern society, including sex and relationships through the well-designed 'GREAT lives' lessons. This enables pupils to build the knowledge that they need to be well prepared for life outside of school. All pupils receive age-appropriate careers and further education advice. The school aims to raise pupils' expectations of what they can achieve in the future through visits to universities and a wide range of workplaces. Pupils increasingly move on to appropriate destinations at the end of Year 11.

In recent years, the pace of school improvement has increased. The trust has supported the work of the school financially and through the appointment of additional staff into various positions. This has strengthened the school's capacity for

further improvement. During this period of change leaders have been considerate of staff's workload and well-being. The well-informed local governing body provides additional support and challenge to 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)

- In a few subjects, the curriculum is not delivered consistently well. This hinders pupils' progress through the curriculum. The school should ensure that teachers in these subjects are fully equipped to deliver the curriculum effectively.
- A small number of pupils in each year group do not behave as well as they should. This is because some staff do not apply the behaviour policy consistently and effectively. As a result, other pupils are not able to learn as well as they should. The school should ensure that staff implement behaviour strategies consistently and effectively so that learning is not disrupted.
- Some pupils, including those with SEND, do not attend school as regularly as they should. These pupils are not accessing the full curriculum and they miss out on important learning. The school should further develop its strategies to work constructively with parents and carers to overcome the barriers which, at present, stop some pupils from making the most of their education.

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 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	139294
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	10314036
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	632
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Jones
CEO of the trust	Brendan Loughran
Headteacher	Ruth Craven
Website	www.copleyacademy.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	30 November and 1 December 2021, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Great Academies Education Trust.
- 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.
- No pupils attend alternative provision.

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.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders, staff and members of the local governing body, including the chair of the local governing body.
- An inspector met with the CEO of the trust and trustees.
- An inspector spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school's improvement plans, records of governing body meetings and analysis of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took into account 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 carried out deep dives in English, art and design, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects and visited some lessons in other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. No responses were received from Ofsted's online pupil survey.

Inspection team

Timothy Gartside, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Paula Crawley	Ofsted Inspector
Deborah Bailey	Ofsted Inspector
Phill Walmsley	Ofsted Inspector

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