

Inspection of a good school: Sycamore Academy

Abbotsford Drive, St Ann's, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG3 4QP

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 June 2024

Outcome

Sycamore Academy continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Paul Worley. This school is part of L.E.A.D. Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Diana Owen, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andy Buck.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this welcoming and inclusive school. They appreciate their caring teachers, who are always ready to help them. They feel listened to and safe because staff are quick to help them to resolve any problems.

Pupils are enthusiastic learners and aim to do their best. They explain that 'you need to be responsible to be in our school family'. If they find this difficult, they get extra help. Pupils say that bullying is rare. They relish receiving golden tickets for showing 'SHINE' attitudes, such as 'everyone works together'. Pupils are proud to be part of the citizen group, and to take on responsibilities such as school councillors and lunchtime servers.

The school is aspirational for all its pupils. They study a wide range of interesting topics and books that enthuse them to learn new and ambitious vocabulary. Pupils take being a global citizen seriously and celebrate the diverse cultures within their community. They have many valuable experiences, including music and sports, as well as going on residential visits, including overseas. Pupils' talents and interests are nurtured.

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

The school is ambitious for every child to receive the best possible education. There have been many staff changes during the past year. The school has worked alongside the trust to ensure that it continues to improve. This has included timely support to boost the capacity of the dedicated staff team.

The school has made many recent changes to its systems and procedures. This has included refining some curriculum plans. Staff have the expertise to deliver and make checks on the curriculum. In most subjects, the curriculum is well taught. Staff revisit important learning with pupils so that they can recall what they have learned and build on it successfully. However, in a small number of subjects, the curriculum is not consistently well delivered and pupils do not learn as much of the subject curriculum as leaders intend.

Reading is a priority at Sycamore Academy. There is a rigorous and consistent approach to teaching pupils to read. They begin to learn to read as soon as they join in the Reception year. Children in the Nursery develop important listening and sound discrimination skills. Carefully selected books are used as part of the curriculum. The school ensures that pupils become confident readers who can study texts in detail. Adults read regularly with and to pupils. Pupils enjoy using the rich array of books across the school. This helps them to develop a love of reading.

The school has refined the mathematics curriculum. Leaders have provided staff with useful training in this refined approach. Pupils are supported to systematically explain and deepen their learning. They have helpful opportunities to broaden their understanding of reasoning and problem-solving.

The school ensures that pupils learn increasingly sophisticated vocabulary across all subjects. As a result, pupils' confidence to explain their understanding increases as they move through the school.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully included in the life of the school. The well-considered pastoral provision supports these pupils to be ready to learn. The school has improved how it makes checks on the gaps in knowledge that pupils with SEND may have. However, staff do not reliably provide the right support and adaptations to the curriculum that these pupils may need. Sometimes, pupils with SEND do not develop their independence and fluency as quickly as they could.

Children get off to a strong start in the early years. This is because the school makes strong links with children and their families. Children enjoy the engaging activities and clear routines. This prepares them well in readiness for Year 1 and beyond.

The school has a calm and purposeful environment. Learning is rarely disrupted. Pupils' attitudes to their learning are positive. Most attend regularly. Where this is not the case, the school takes robust steps to improve attendance.

The school prioritises pupils' well-being. Pupils learn about different beliefs and family structures. They have an age-appropriate understanding of relationships and of respect. They are being well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Parents appreciate the approachable school staff. The vast majority feel confident that their children are safe and happy.

Staff are proud to work at Sycamore Academy. They say that they feel fairly treated as part of this supportive team. Staff appreciate that leaders have been mindful of their well-being, particularly during many recent changes.

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 subjects, the school's curriculum is not as well implemented as it is in others. Pupils' learning in these subjects is not as secure as it could be. The school should ensure that teachers receive the support they need to deliver the curriculum fully across all subjects so that all pupils, including in the early years, achieve as well as they can.
- Some pupils with SEND do not learn their curriculum with increasing fluency and independence. This does not help them to make as much progress as they could. The school should ensure that staff provide precise support and adaptations so they become increasingly fluent and independent learners.

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 November 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 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	137786
Local authority	Nottingham
Inspection number	10339673
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	two to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	503
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
CEO of the Trust	Diana Owens
Headteacher	Paul Worley
Website	www.sycamoreacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 November 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the L.E.A.D Academy Trust.
- The headteacher was not present during the inspection. The school has been supported by an executive headteacher from the trust.
- There have been a number of staff changes, including a significant number of key leadership roles.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- There is an on-site breakfast club run by the school.

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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in this evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with the deputy headteachers, other school leaders, representatives of the trust and members of the academy governing body.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and foreign languages. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work. The inspector listened to pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to a member of staff. The inspector also met with leaders and looked at curriculum plans and samples of pupils' work for science, history and geography.
- The inspector spoke with parents and took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. The inspector also spoke with groups of pupils and staff.
- 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 reviewed a range of documents, including leaders' self-evaluation, the school development plan, documentation relating to behaviour, attendance and governance, as well as information available on the school's website.

Inspection team

Mandy Wilding, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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