

Inspection of Knowle DGE Academy

Novers Road, Bristol BS4 1QY

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
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Kate Lee-Wells. The school is part of Midsomer Norton Learning Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Alun Williams, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Tony Wells.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are safe and well cared for. Typically, pupils enjoy attending school. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, work hard in lessons. Pupils understand the school rules because staff apply agreed approaches consistently.

Staff and pupils form strong relationships. On occasions, when pupils get overly anxious or find it difficult to maintain self-control, staff use effective techniques to re-engage pupils in learning as soon as possible.

Carefully planned social times facilitate pupils' independence, alongside developing their social skills and interactions with one another. For example, 'Lego club' on the double decker bus is a favourite for many. Outside, pupils enjoy a range of small group games. For those who need quieter lunchtimes, there are well-supervised areas inside and out.

The curriculum broadens pupils' experiences well. Pupils benefit from activities like paddle boarding, theatre visits and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Staff support pupils to grow their individual interests through art, music production and animal care, for example. Pupils learn how to manage money and how to cook.

Pupils value that they can study a mix of academic and vocational curriculums. This gives them the core knowledge and skills they need to go on to study at college and for future employment.

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

The trust and school work together to drive school improvement effectively. As a result, the quality of education pupils receive is now good. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, are positive about the impact the school has on their lives. Pupils are well prepared for their next stages of education and employment. The school supports teachers who are new to the profession very well. The trust is growing the governing body effectively. It delivers its statutory duties successfully.

Typically, pupils follow ambitious curriculums. They learn successfully in English, mathematics and science because staff use their secure subject knowledge to teach these curriculums well. All staff benefit from a raft of training and curriculum support, including from the trust. This means that non-specialists are equipped to teach essential curriculum content well. Pupils are further supported through appropriate therapies, well matched to their needs.

All staff prioritise the teaching of phonics until pupils can read fluently. Practising reading aloud with adults is central to the school's strategy to ensure that all pupils become confident readers. Staff use high-quality texts to expand pupils' vocabulary. Pupils who follow vocational courses, such as motor mechanics and construction, relish learning new technical vocabulary, practical techniques and how to use tools safely.

Pupils follow different curriculum pathways according to their needs. Many curriculum pathways are well established. There is a new curriculum pathway for pupils who find it difficult to attend classes with their peers or those who are at risk of exclusion. The school is developing this provision to support pupils to increase their time in school and return to full-time education. However, this work is at an early stage. The trust and school do not yet have a clear oversight of its impact to date.

The school is refining its approach to assessing what pupils know and remember. This supports pupils to retain the essential subject content that they need. It also checks pupils' progress towards their education health and care (EHC) plans. As staff are still getting to grips with this new approach, some of the targets set for pupils are too broad. Therefore, at times, teaching does not build explicitly on what pupils already know or best prepare them for what comes next.

The personal, social, health and economic curriculum supports pupils to develop their character well. There is a strong emphasis on supporting pupils' mental well-being and teaching about protected characteristics. Pupils receive advice and guidance about their next steps in education or training. Staff work with pupils, families and external providers to ensure that college placements are suitable and that pupils' transition to these are successful. Well-thought-out work experience boosts pupils' independence and understanding of the world of work.

In the past, pupils' attendance was low. The impact of the stringent systems in place to challenge poor attendance is notable. This means that many pupils who were severely absent in the past are now attending much more. As a result, the rate of persistent absence is decreasing steadily.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's work to refine the way in which it uses assessment to find out what pupils know, remember and can do, against their EHC plans, is not complete. This means that some targets are too broad for pupils to achieve, or that teaching is not well directed to what pupils need to know next. At times, teaching does not demand enough of pupils. The school and trust must ensure that the use of assessment supports pupils to progress through the curriculum successfully and achieve highly.
- The school's work to provide a bespoke curriculum for pupils who find it difficult to attend classes with their peers or are at risk of permanent exclusion is still very new. The trust and school do not have strong enough oversight of it, so the impact of this provision is still to be fully determined. The school and trust must

ensure that this provision supports pupils' successful re-integration into lessons, so they benefit from the full breadth of the curriculum.

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	144655
Local authority	Bristol City of
Inspection number	10322309
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	165
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	36
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trustees	Tony Wells
CEO	Alun Williams
Headteacher	Kate Lee-Wells
Website	www.knowledgeacademysch.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	16 and 17 February 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Knowle DGE Academy converted to become part of Midsomer Norton Learning Partnership on 1 September 2023.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. The school supports pupils who have learning difficulties, speech, language and communication difficulties, autism spectrum disorder, and social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Pupils benefit from a range of curriculum pathways, which are matched to their need or future aspirations.
- The school uses five unregistered alternative providers.
- There are currently no pupils in the early years foundation stage.

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, executive headteacher and other staff during the inspection. An inspector met with the chief executive officer (CEO), a trustee and the school improvement partner from the trust. An inspector also held telephone conversations with a local authority officer from Bristol local authority and staff from two alternative providers.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, science, physical education and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- In addition, inspectors reviewed the impact of the history and geography curriculums.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 considered the responses to the questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the online staff survey. Inspectors held meetings with school staff and groups of pupils during the inspection to gather their views. There were no responses to the online pupil survey.

Inspection team

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