

Inspection of Arena Academy

Beeches Road, Great Barr, Birmingham, West Midlands B42 2PY

Inspection dates:	12 and 13 November 2024
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 Raj Mann. This school is part of the CORE 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), Jo Tyler, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Tom Gibbins.

What is it like to attend this school?

Since the previous inspection, the school has significantly improved. It has high expectations of achievement for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This is not yet shown in recent outcomes for national tests. However, improvements to the curriculum show stronger impact on what current pupils know and remember. Pupils recognise the improvements that have taken place.

Pupils are polite, considerate and respectful. They are familiar with the school's values of collaboration, opportunity, respect and excellence. Relationships between pupils and staff are warm. Pupils say they feel safe at school.

Attendance to school is now much better. Behaviour has also improved significantly. Suspensions have reduced considerably. Pupils respond to the school's high expectations and learn to make positive choices in their conduct. As a result, they behave well in lessons and conduct themselves in an orderly and calm manner around school. In lessons, pupils are attentive and focus on their learning.

Pupils are very proud of the school's diverse community. They appreciate the efforts to make a curriculum that reflects their heritage and background. The family feel of the school is strong. Pupils feel that staff listen to their needs and look to make changes as appropriate.

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

Trustees, trust leaders, the school and governors work closely together to focus on the priorities for school improvement. They have established an ambitious and inclusive vision for the school. They are rigorous in monitoring the impact of their actions. Therefore, they have a clear understanding of what needs to improve and how that can be achieved. Consequently, significant improvements have been made across the whole school.

The school has planned an ambitious and carefully sequenced curriculum. The curriculum has appropriate breadth and depth to build pupils' wider knowledge and understanding. In key stage 4, pupils can choose from a range of subjects that match their career aspirations. Pupils with SEND learn the same curriculum. Teachers are given high-quality information about the individual needs of these pupils. They plan adaptations effectively to support pupils' learning.

Teachers are well trained and have strong subject knowledge. They use this to provide pupils with clear explanations and relevant activities so that they can learn effectively. In some lessons, staff carefully check pupils' understanding. They address misconceptions quickly and challenge pupils to think deeply. However, this practice is inconsistent. As a result, at times, some pupils do not fully understand what they are learning.

On the whole, pupils produce high-quality work. This includes pieces of extended writing across their subjects. Pupils' outcomes are now beginning to improve, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND.

The school prioritises reading. It systematically identifies pupils who have fallen behind. Staff provide specialist and targeted support so that these pupils catch up. The school also promotes a love of reading. All pupils have frequent opportunities to read in lessons as well as in dedicated time in form groups.

A small number of pupils access some of their education at alternative provisions. Pupils benefit from this due to the targeted support they get.

Pupils have access to a well-designed personal development and careers programme. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain. They understand risk and how to stay safe, including when they are online. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships and consent. The academy provides many opportunities to nurture pupils' talents and interests. Pupils appreciate the clubs and trips the school offers. Some pupils are also very proud to hold leadership roles. The careers curriculum prepares pupils for their future choices when they leave the school. Pupils learn about the pathways open to them post-16.

Staff understand their role in keeping pupils safe and know what actions to take if they have any concerns. Leaders consider the workload and well-being of staff when making decisions. Most parents and carers recognise that the school has improved. They are very positive about how the school now supports their children.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some lessons, assessment is not used effectively to gain a clear picture of what pupils know and understand. Where this is the case, teachers are not able to address misconceptions or gaps in knowledge. This means that, for some pupils, their progress through the curriculum is restricted. The school should ensure that current strategies are embedded to gain consistency in lessons so that pupils are able to build strong knowledge and understanding.

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	145580
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10344144
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	1,150
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tom Gibbins
CEO of the trust	Jo Tyler
Headteacher	Raj Mann
Website	www.corearena.academy
Dates of previous inspection	7 and 8 June 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of CORE Education Trust. The school joined the trust in March 2018.
- The school uses four registered alternative provisions.
- 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.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school’s education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the CEO, trust executives, governors, senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and pupils. They also talked informally to pupils and staff to gather general information about school life.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning, and looked at samples of pupils’ work.
- Inspectors also visited lessons in some other subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed the personal, social, health and economic education curriculum plan and spoke with leaders about this. An inspector also reviewed the support provided for pupils with regards to reading.
- 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 looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to behaviour, bullying and attendance.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including leaders’ plans to improve the school and their self-evaluation of the school’s work.
- Inspectors took account of responses from Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Nicola Walters, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Bailie	Ofsted Inspector
Jacqui Swindlehurst	Ofsted Inspector
Darren Bishop	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Epton	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024