

Inspection of Firth Park Academy

Fircroft Avenue, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S5 0SD

Inspection dates:	17 and 18 June 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Good

The principal of this school is Nigel Whittle. This school is part of Lift Schools, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Rebecca Boomer Clark, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Hall.

What is it like to attend this school?

Over time, the school's expectations of what pupils should achieve have not been high enough. Pupils have not achieved well in external examinations. Similarly, standards of behaviour have not been high enough.

Pupils are starting to benefit from recent improvements. They recognise how these changes are beginning to help them to learn more in lessons. The school has put in place many strategies to support pupils prepare for public examinations. Pupils in key stage 4 value their support sessions. However, there remains more to do to ensure pupils achieve well.

The school has increased the expectations it has for pupils' behaviour. Lessons are increasingly calm. This enables pupils to focus on their learning.

Pupils value their personal, social and health education. They learn important topics such as how to keep themselves safe, including online. Most pupils feel safe in school and know that they have a trusted adult they can speak with.

Pupils' understanding of some important aspects of life in modern Britain are not fully developed. For example, pupils do not have a deep understanding of the protected characteristics. They do not have the required vocabulary to talk about difference appropriately. This can lead to unkind language that occurs too often.

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

The school has made many recent improvements to the curriculum. There is now a more ambitious curriculum in place. However, there is still inconsistency in how well this curriculum is implemented. Where effective, pupils are helped to remember their learning. For example, teachers use activities to help pupils recall what they have learned and check on what they know well. However, this practice is not consistent. Too often, pupils are not given enough time to apply their learning. As a result, they do not learn as well as they should.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access the same curriculum as their peers. The school accurately identifies their needs. Teachers are well informed of the support which pupils with SEND require. Adaptions are usually made to help pupils access their learning. For example, staff help pupils to use laptops in thoughtful ways to record and link their learning.

Pupils read a range of texts which expose them to ambitious vocabulary. This helps them to understand books they like or dislike. As a result, pupils are developing their enjoyment of reading. They make informed choices about the types of books that they like to read. Pupils in the early stages of reading are swiftly identified. Support is in place to help these pupils become more fluent and confident readers. This helps them to access the curriculum.

Although the school places high priority on the attendance of pupils, strategies to improve attendance are not reaching some pupils well enough. Too many pupils are absent from school regularly, particularly the most vulnerable. As a result, they miss out on the important learning opportunities that the school provides. Leaders of the school and the trust have clarified the expectations for behaviour in school. Lessons are more conducive to learning. Many staff and pupils recognise the positive impact of these changes. Incidents of suspension for poor behaviour are declining but remain high. There is further work to do to help some pupils reach the high expectations of the school.

Pupils benefit from learning about different careers. Older pupils value their work experience. This helps them to develop a range of aspirations for their future. They progress on to positive next steps in education, employment or training. Pupils enjoy culture day and attending school in their cultural dress. This is helping to raise pupils' awareness of differences in society. However there remains more to do to help pupils to understand, embrace and celebrate diversity fully.

Leaders have raised the expectations at the school. School leaders and those from the trust are working together to make the school a better place to be for pupils. Those responsible for governance offer a high level of challenge and support. Many staff and pupils recognise how these changes are starting to have a positive impact. Despite this, some improvements are at an early stage and require further time to embed and to realise their intended impact.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes the activities which teachers use do not help pupils recall and embed their learning. This means that some pupils do not develop a rich body of knowledge. The school should ensure that the activities which teachers choose are well matched to the aims of the curriculum and help pupils acquire and apply deeper knowledge over time so that they achieve well.
- The attendance of some pupils is too low. When not in school, these pupils do not benefit from the improving quality of education that the school provides. The school should strengthen its work with parents and carers, as well as external agencies, to improve the attendance of pupils.
- Some pupils' understanding of the protected characteristics is not developed in sufficient depth. As a result, they are not prepared for life in modern Britain as well as they should be. The school should intensify work to teach pupils about these important aspects and ensure that it addresses instances where pupils' actions undermine this.

- The school has made significant changes to improve many aspects of provision. Although gaining traction, these are in the early stages of development and there remains variance in the experiences of pupils in the school. The school and trust should further embed these important improvements and check their impact.

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	139334
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	10379380
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,189
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Hall
CEO of the trust	Rebecca Boomer Clark
Principal	Nigel Whittle
Website	www.firthparkacademy.org
Dates of previous inspection	23 and 24 April 2024, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The principal joined the school in February 2025. There have also been other recent appointments to the senior leadership team.
- The school is part of Lift Schools multi-academy trust.
- The school makes use of 11 unregistered providers of alternative provision.
- 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 met with the principal and other senior leaders in the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: art and design, English, history, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- An inspector met with the leader of provision for pupils with SEND.
- The lead inspector met with the trust's national education director. He also met with the regional education director to discuss the role of the trust board.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- 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 considered the views of parents through the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff and pupils through meetings held with them and through their responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Andrew Gibbins, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Matthew West	Ofsted Inspector
Dave Wadsworth	Ofsted Inspector
Nicola Reed	Ofsted Inspector
Joe Barton	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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