

Inspection of City Academy

23 Langley Walk, Birmingham B15 2EF

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 March 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

City Academy is a vibrant and welcoming school. Pupils thrive in the warm, friendly and respectful culture. They are highly ambitious for themselves and want to learn. They have very positive attitudes and wear their uniform with pride. They are polite to adults and keen to talk about their school.

Leaders have the highest expectations for their pupils. The curriculum is planned very well, but not all lessons are yet good enough. Leaders have worked very hard and effectively to improve behaviour and attendance in a very short period of time. As a result, pupils now behave very well in lessons and around the school site. Pupils appreciate the strong focus staff have on ensuring that everyone behaves well. They know that staff will not tolerate inappropriate behaviour. If they are worried or experience any of the rare instances of bullying, they know they can speak to someone. Consequently, pupils say they feel safe in school.

Pupils and staff enjoy extremely positive relationships. Pupils say that staff look after them very well, providing lots of support and guidance.

The school provides a range of sporting, arts and other cultural opportunities. Pupils say they particularly like going on trips.

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

The new headteacher and other senior leaders provide strong leadership. Pupils are always at the heart of all their decision-making. Through her principled and skilful leadership, the headteacher has brought the staff together. They now form a highly effective team, working for the best interests of the pupils.

Since the start of this academic year, leaders have taken the right steps to move the school forward. Leaders are persistent in ensuring they appoint the best teachers for their pupils. They ensure that all staff receive support and training appropriate to their needs.

Leaders have planned and sequenced the curriculum to fit the needs of the pupils. They ensure that all pupils experience the same challenging curriculum, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, planning for the needs of these pupils is not effective in all subjects.

Teachers explain new concepts with clarity. They provide lots of recall activities to help pupils remember knowledge long term. In many lessons, teachers provide pupils with interesting activities which engage them well. They also check pupils' understanding frequently throughout the lesson. Some teachers adapt learning well to ensure pupils with SEND have the support they need. However, this is not yet consistent across all lessons.

Pupils work hard in lessons and enjoy learning. They want to be knowledgeable and successful. They are keen to take part in lessons, and many produce some lovely work. However, some pupils have difficulties with handwriting and completing their work. This is not yet being addressed.

The school has recently introduced the use of phonics for pupils who are not yet at the expected level of reading. This is already leading to improvements. Pupils say that they like reading but would prefer to have a wider range of books to suit their needs. The trust also provides a language programme for pupils with low levels of English. These pupils say that it has really helped them learn English quickly.

The personal, social and health education programme is comprehensive and responsive to pupils' needs. It is enhanced with a wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as singing in the trust's choir. Pupils understand the importance of healthy relationships, equality and British values. Where pupils may experience problems, the pastoral team provides individual support.

The careers programme starts in Year 7. Pupils learn about different types of careers and future opportunities. This includes visits to universities and colleges. Pupils in Year 9 say that this has helped them in choosing their options.

The vast majority of staff are very positive about the support they receive. They say that leaders care about their well-being and have taken effective steps to reduce workload.

Governors provide a wide range of specialist knowledge, skills and experience. They know the strengths of the school and where improvements need to be made. They are effective in holding leaders to account.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders understand the local risks to their pupils. There is regular training for all staff, who know what to do if there is a concern or a disclosure. Where pupils need help, leaders respond appropriately. Leaders make referrals in a timely manner. They take care to provide the support that pupils and their families need.

Leaders conduct thorough checks when appointing new staff.

Pupils feel safe in school and know whom to go to if they have a concern. They also know how to keep themselves safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not made sure that all teachers check how well pupils have understood their learning, and adapt the curriculum to meet their needs. As a result, pupils, particularly those with SEND, do not always learn as much as they could. Leaders should make sure that all teachers know when and how to adapt learning successfully.
- Pupils say that in form reading time they do not get a choice of texts to read. As a result, pupils become frustrated and do not always see reading as a positive experience. Leaders should ensure that pupils' views and needs are taken into account when choosing texts.
- The new special educational needs coordinator has provided information to staff to support their planning for pupils with SEND. However, these profiles are not yet being used well enough across the curriculum, which is leading to inconsistent planning for SEND and the adaptation of the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that staff receive further training and development on planning and adapting teaching and learning for pupils with SEND.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	148187
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10256829
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	727
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tom Gibbins
Headteacher	Rebecca Bakewell
Website	http://www.corecity.academy
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- City Academy joined CORE Education Trust on 1 September 2020.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation. This means that pupils in Years 7 to 11 receive information and engagement about the full range of education and training options open to them. This includes opportunities for a range of education and training providers to speak to pupils about technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- School leaders use two registered alternative provisions.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector held a meeting with the group chief executive officer and the interim

chief executive officer, and with the chair and members of the local governing body.

- Deep dives in English, mathematics, science, history and religious education were completed. These included discussions with subject leaders and teachers, visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work. Inspectors also met with pupils to discuss their learning in these subjects.
- Discussions also focused on personal development, behaviour and attendance.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including leaders' plans to improve the school, their self-evaluation of the school's work, and behaviour and attendance logs.
- When inspecting safeguarding, the inspectors considered the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe, the checks made to ensure safer recruitment and the quality of staff training.

Inspection team

Nicola Walters, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Epton	Ofsted Inspector
Mike Onyon	Ofsted Inspector
Graeme Rudland	Ofsted Inspector

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