

Inspection of The Axis Academy

Lodgefields Drive, Crewe CW2 8TU

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 March 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
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?

The Axis Academy is a warm and nurturing place. Pupils are happy and feel safe here. Every morning they are welcomed into school and given a chance to settle in. Leaders and staff have high expectations of every pupil. Pupils behave well and try their best in lessons. Pupils achieve well overall.

Pupils who come to this school have often missed a lot of education. Staff foster positive relationships with pupils. Pupils told inspectors that they feel valued and cared for by staff. This helps them to re-engage with their education.

Pupils respond positively to the clear routines set by staff. Pupils learn to trust staff. They value the help they receive to manage their feelings. On the very rare occasions when bullying occurs, staff deal with it effectively.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of activities, such as sports, trips and outdoor learning. These help them to develop their confidence and self-esteem. They develop leadership skills through, for example, refereeing football during breaktimes and participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Pupils are well prepared for life beyond school.

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

Leaders have established a curriculum that is personalised to meet the individual needs of pupils. The curriculum provides many opportunities to enhance pupils' social and emotional skills.

In most subjects, leaders have identified the most important knowledge they want pupils to gain and when this should be taught. This helps pupils to build on what they know. From their individual starting points, pupils make positive progress through the curriculums for these subjects. However, in a small number of subjects, leaders are still defining what they want pupils to know and the order in which this new learning should be taught. In these subjects, a small number of pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Staff use pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans well to meet the individual needs of pupils. Leaders work closely with external agencies of professionals, such as speech and language therapists, to make sure that pupils receive the help they need. Staff speak highly of the training they receive to support pupils.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They use this well to explain new learning clearly to pupils. Teachers use a range of assessment strategies effectively to check that pupils can recall prior learning and to address any misconceptions they may have.

Leaders have made reading a high priority. Many pupils arrive with gaps in their reading knowledge. Leaders make sure that pupils who find reading more difficult receive appropriate support from well-trained staff. This is helping pupils to catch up quickly. Most pupils use their knowledge of phonics well to sound out unfamiliar words. Staff make sure that reading books are closely matched to the sounds that pupils know. This is helping them to develop their confidence and fluency in reading.

The learning environment is calm. Staff are well trained to support pupils who display challenging behaviours. They reward pupils when they are doing the right thing. This helps to improve the behaviour of pupils. As a result, learning is rarely disrupted, and pupils can focus on their work. Leaders' actions to raise attendance levels have led to improvements for some pupils. However, some pupils continue to be absent too often. Consequently, these pupils miss out on learning.

Leaders place a strong focus on developing pupils' mental health. Horse riding and dog therapy are also used as a calming influence for pupils with anxiety issues. Pupils receive appropriate relationships, sex and health education. Leaders equip pupils with important life skills, such as how to cook and budget. Pupils learn about democracy and what is right and wrong. They show respect for differences between people. Pupils enjoy raising money to support charities. They receive high-quality careers guidance. Older pupils benefit from carefully designed work experience placements. This allows them to make informed choices about their next steps.

The number of staff has grown steadily since the school opened. Staff love working at the school. They feel that leaders listen to their concerns and are considerate of their workload. Trustees carry out their duties effectively. They challenge and support leaders well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of vigilance and support in the school. All staff are well trained in safeguarding procedures. They know how to spot potential signs of abuse, and they know what to do if they have any concerns. Leaders work closely with external agencies to ensure that pupils get the support they need if there is risk of harm.

Leaders ensure that pupils are safe when they are absent from school or when they attend alternative provision. Pupils learn about the dangers of drugs, alcohol and criminal exploitation. They know how to keep themselves safe when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders are in the process of defining exactly what pupils should learn and in what order it should be taught. This is hindering some pupils from learning as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that they refine the curriculum further to identify the important content that pupils should be taught.
- Some pupils do not attend school regularly. Consequently, they miss valuable learning time, which negatively impacts on their achievement. Leaders should continue to support these pupils and their families to improve attendance.

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	147854
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10255940
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	59
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Rob Halsall
Headteacher	Paul Eager
Website	www.theaxisacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Axis Academy opened in September 2020. It is part of the Youth Engagement Schools (YES) Trust.
- The school provides education for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Some pupils have autism spectrum disorder. All pupils in the school have an EHC plan.
- The school currently caters for pupils in Year 6 to Year 11.
- There have been some changes in leadership and staffing since the school opened. This includes the appointment of a new headteacher in April 2022. In addition, a new chair of the board of trustees and chair of local support board were appointed in 2022.
- School leaders make use of one unregistered and two registered alternative providers for a very small number of pupils.
- 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

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 spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders and staff. An inspector spoke with the chief executive officer and director of education of the YES multi-academy trust, local governors and trustees. An inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to many pupils about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, including the single central record. They met with leaders, staff and pupils to check how effective safeguarding is in the school. An inspector held telephone conversations with representatives of three alternative providers.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation document, school improvement plan, minutes of governor meetings, records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, including early reading, art and design and mathematics. 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. An inspector observed pupils reading to familiar staff.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and the responses to the staff surveys and pupil surveys. An inspector spoke with parents before the start of the school day to gather their views.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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