

Inspection of a good school: Discovery Academy

Vernons Lane, Nuneaton, Warwickshire CV11 5SS

Inspection dates: 30 and 31 January 2024

Outcome

Discovery Academy continues to be a good school.

The head of school is Tony Leigh. This school is part of MacIntyre Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the interim head of Macintyre Academies Trust, Andy Moran, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Neil Macmillan. There is also an executive principal, Emily Hopkins-Hayes, who is responsible for this school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Everyone is made to feel welcome at this school. Leaders want the best outcomes for all pupils. Staff work hard to build positive relationships with pupils and to help them feel welcome within the school community. Pupils speak positively about the support and guidance that staff provide. This helps them to overcome barriers to learning. As a result, most pupils have a positive school experience.

The school has established clear expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils understand the systems in place. They know how to access support when they need it or to speak to a trusted adult if they have any worries. Typically, the school is calm and orderly. Generally, pupils behave well. Any relationship breakdowns are supported well by both the compassionate schools and the 'family footings' team.

Leaders cater for pupils' personal development particularly well. Pupils have access to many opportunities. These include sports, mindfulness, arts, coding, drumming sessions and outdoor activities such as forest school. Pupils benefit from trips and visits to, for example, museums and theatres. These experiences enhance their understanding of the curriculum. Pupils enjoy taking part in leadership responsibilities, including being student councillors or being part of the LGBTQ group. All of this helps pupils to play an active role in school life.

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

Leaders have implemented a curriculum that is of similar breadth, depth and ambition to the national curriculum. In most subjects, the curriculum is well thought out, and careful

consideration has been given to what pupils will learn and when. In history, for example, this helps pupils consolidate their understanding before making connections and analysing historical events. Similarly, in art, the curriculum is progressively layered, with pupils learning about patterns and three-dimensional shapes before moving on to more complex work. However, in a small number of subjects, the school has not identified clearly the most important concepts that pupils need to know and remember. This means that pupils are not always building their knowledge over time in a sequential way.

Staff take careful note of the advice in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans. This helps to ensure that pupils receive appropriate support in class. Teachers use assessment well to check that pupils are progressing through the curriculum and to identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge.

Reading is promoted throughout the school. All pupils receive daily reading sessions, and most confidently read from books that match the sounds they know. Older pupils who may have fallen behind get extra, targeted support to help them catch up quickly so that they can access the rest of the curriculum. There is a systematic approach to teaching early reading. All staff have benefited from high-quality training to enable them to deliver the phonics programme effectively. Pupils are engaged in these sessions and make good progress.

Staff manage pupils' behaviour well. This is because appropriate strategies are in place to support pupils to regulate their behaviour and remain focused on their learning. Attendance is an ongoing focus for the school, and leaders are aware of this. Some pupils have been out of school for a significant period. The school works alongside external agencies to bring about improvements in pupils' attendance. Their work is leading to increases in the attendance of most pupils. However, there are a small number of pupils who are still absent from school too often. Consequently, these pupils miss out on essential learning.

Leaders have made sure that there is a programme of activities that helps pupils to develop their individual character and sense of responsibility. Pupils learn the importance of tolerance and respect for people who may live their lives differently or have different backgrounds or beliefs. Through the curriculum, pupils are taught about a wide range of important personal and social issues, including how to keep safe online and how to build positive and healthy relationships. This prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.

The school's offer to promote careers information, education, advice and guidance is strong. Pupils take part in work experience, attend careers fairs and receive visits from guest speakers from the fire service, police, and hospitality and health services. Pupils also access a skills-builder programme, writing workshops and travel training. Staff ensure that pupils leave school at the end of key stage 4 or post-16 with appropriate qualifications to access further education, training or employment of their choice.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about how the school is led. Staff feel very well supported by the school and trust leaders. They report that it is a happy place to work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, the precise knowledge that the school wants pupils to learn is not clearly identified. This lack of precision creates gaps in pupils' knowledge. The school should ensure that the precise knowledge that pupils are expected to learn is clearly identified within these subjects.
- The attendance of some pupils remains too low. These pupils are not fully benefiting from the education that the school provides. The school should ensure that improved oversight of attendance reflects the latest advice and guidance, and it should continue to work with pupils, their families and external agencies to ensure that these pupils attend school frequently.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in July 2018.

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	140654
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	10294597
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	9 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	97
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	7
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Neil Macmillan
Head of School	Tony Leigh
Website	www.thediscoveryacademy.org/
Dates of previous inspection	3 and 4 July 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Discovery Academy is one of four schools in the Macintyre Academies Trust.
- The school's governing body is known as the local advisory board and reports to the Macintyre Academies Trust Board.
- Discovery Academy is a special school for pupils with autism spectrum disorder and/or social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All the pupils attending the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and have an EHC plan.
- The school uses three unregistered providers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- 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 this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation. This included the school's self-evaluation, school development plan, school policies, curriculum documents, SEND records, attendance records, behaviour records and minutes of meetings held by the governing body.
- 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.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher, members of the local advisory board, chair of trustees and the interim director for academies.
- Inspectors held meetings with a range of leaders to discuss provision for pupils with SEND, pupils' behaviour, attendance and pupils' wider development.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, history and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils, formally and informally, about their learning and experiences at the school.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses received during the inspection. Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's staff survey and pupil survey.

Inspection team

Amjid Zaman, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Wayne Simner

His Majesty's 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