

Inspection of Atam Academy

Little Heath, Romford RM6 4XX

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 May 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy their learning and are happy at school. Pupils, including those who are new to the school, spoke of the warm and friendly atmosphere. They are safe. Pupils know that they can speak to the adults if they have any concerns or make use of the school's 'worry boxes'.

Leaders encourage pupils to abide by the school's seven values. Pupils value receiving rewards, for example for acting with compassion or showing resilience. Sometimes, pupils do not behave well or work hard in lessons, particularly when they are taught by supply teachers.

Pupils insist that bullying is not an issue here. Staff manage and resolve any incidents of bullying effectively. They work with pupils to help them understand the harm such behaviour can cause.

Pupils have many opportunities to discuss and explore topical and moral issues. For example, the 'Talking Titans' debate club is popular. Pupils celebrate various Sikh festivals together, such as Vaisakhi, through drop-down days, as well as being taught about other religions and perspectives.

Academic expectations lack ambition. The curriculum is not consistently well planned or delivered across primary and secondary phases. As a result, pupils do not develop the key knowledge they need in some subjects.

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

Leaders have clear aims for the quality of education. They have started to put their plans into place. This includes thinking about what pupils will study at GCSE from next year onwards. Currently, from Nursery to Year 9, pupils' learning is not well thought out and sequenced. Across different subjects, year groups and phases, pupils do not build up secure knowledge as they progress through the school.

In some subjects in both primary and secondary phases, the curriculum does not cover important content. This leads to gaps in pupils' knowledge. Long intervals of time between lessons in other subjects such as design and technology and art, limit pupils' ability to remember subject content. Leaders and other staff have recently introduced new assessment systems to check pupils' learning. They have begun to take action to address misconceptions or gaps in pupils' knowledge.

All pupils have access to the wide range of subjects on offer. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have effective support. Leaders work with a range of specialists in SEND who help to ensure the needs of pupils with SEND are identified and met.

Secondary subject specialists often support staff in the primary phase to build their subject-specific knowledge. This has been useful in subjects including history, art

and design and technology. Teaching staff in the primary phase spoke about recent training that has helped them to refine their practice and the positive impact it has had. For example, following recent training, staff use a variety of strategies to recap previous teaching.

Staff use a structured phonics programme from Nursery onwards to teach early reading. Children in the early years have daily phonics lessons and most become fluent readers as they go through Years 1 and 2. Staff identify weaker readers from across the school. These pupils have extra sessions before and during the school day. However, leaders have not prioritised phonics training for all staff. Some staff are not confident in teaching phonics. This affects how well staff help weaker readers to catch up. Staff encourage pupils to read widely. Pupils enjoy reading books together in lessons or in form time. They use their weekly library lessons to choose books which interest them.

Attendance rates are high. Generally, pupils enjoy their learning and behave well. However, sometimes in lessons, low-level disruption disturbs pupils' learning.

Pupils are encouraged to think about issues such as bullying and online safety through discussions in class. They are taught about world religions and the importance of respecting other people's viewpoints. Pupils in Year 8, for example, talked about different religious perspectives on life cycles. Leaders have ensured that the programme for relationships and sex education meets statutory requirements.

Pupils in the secondary phase receive appropriate careers guidance that helps them to make informed choices for the next phase of their education and their future lives. Visiting speakers from a wide range of professions, including medicine and law, provide them with information about different career paths. Pupils have opportunities to develop their leadership skills by representing their peers on the 'student board'.

Leaders' record-keeping is not as well organised as it could be. This means that information about pupils, such as that for behaviour and SEND, is not readily available for leaders or easy to use. Leaders have started to tighten their processes around record-keeping. Leaders' checks on the quality of education are not rigorous. Systems are not well established to monitor how different subjects are delivered in each phase of the school.

Many parents and carers are positive about the recent improvements made by new leaders. However, a number of other parents expressed their dissatisfaction with the way leaders communicate with them and lack confidence in leaders, including those responsible for governance. Staff feel well supported by leaders. They said that leaders are considerate of workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding team is made up of experienced and qualified staff. They take appropriate and prompt action to follow up on any concerns about pupils. Leaders take advice from external specialists to make sure any vulnerable pupils and their families get the support they need. Leaders ensure that all staff receive frequent training to keep safeguarding at the forefront of their minds.

Pupils are taught about keeping themselves safe from the early years upwards. They are taught, in an age-appropriate way, about issues such as healthy relationships and how to report any concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not well planned and sequenced from early years through to key stage 3. This affects how well pupils learn. Pupils do not build up knowledge securely over time in some subjects. Leaders should ensure that pupils' learning from early years through to key stage 3 is planned coherently in all subjects.
- Some staff have not been trained in using the school's phonics programme. This means that sometimes they do not have the expertise needed to help weaker readers to learn to read fluently. Leaders should ensure that all staff, in all phases of the school, have the training they need to help any weaker readers to catch up quickly and develop reading fluency.
- Leaders do not ensure that expectations of behaviour are consistently high. In some lessons, low-level disruption affects pupils' learning. Pupils do not apply themselves fully or show the same levels of respect for all teachers, including supply teachers. Leaders should ensure that, throughout the school, standards of behaviour are consistently high.
- Leaders do not use their record-keeping systems well enough to bring together all their information about pupils. This means that information, such as about behaviour and SEND, is not readily accessible or coherent. Leaders, including those responsible for governance, should ensure that all record-keeping is well organised and monitored stringently.
- Not all parents are happy with the school. They raised concerns about a number of issues, including communication. Leaders should improve their communication with parents and continue their work to build parents' trust in the school.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	142896
Local authority	Redbridge
Inspection number	10207210
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	3 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	823
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Shaminder Rayatt
Principal	David Martin
Website	www.khalsaacademiestrust.com/
Date of previous inspection	15 and 16 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a Sikh ethos.
- The school has expanded since the previous inspection. The secondary phase opened in 2019. The school now has pupils in every year group from Nursery to Year 9.
- The principal took up his role in January 2021. Many of the senior school leaders are new in their posts this academic year.
- There have been significant changes in governance, with six new trustees recently appointed. The chair of the local advisory board was appointed in February 2020. The chief executive officer took up the post in April 2022.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause for pupils in Years 8 and 9 who are covered by the clause. The Baker Clause requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this 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 principal and other members of the school leadership team, including the leaders with responsibility for safeguarding and SEND. Inspectors met with the chief executive officer of the trust, and other directors from the trust were present in some meetings. A remote meeting was held with the chair of the trust, the chair of the local advisory board and the trustee with responsibility for safeguarding. The lead inspector spoke to a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history, geography, physical education and art. For each deep dive, inspectors met with curriculum leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors listened to a sample of pupils read and spoke to pupils about reading.
- Inspectors talked to pupils and staff about other subject areas and spoke to leaders about the curriculum in science, French and music. Inspectors visited lessons in a range of subjects, including Sikh studies, design and technology and English.
- Inspectors considered the effectiveness of safeguarding through discussion with leaders, other staff and pupils. Inspectors reviewed records relating to safeguarding, including records of work with external agencies and pre-recruitment checks.
- Inspectors observed behaviour in lessons and around the school. Inspectors held meetings with groups of pupils from different year groups and had informal discussions with pupils in the playground.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey of parents' views, Ofsted Parent View, and to the online staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Jude Wilson, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Adam Vincent	Her Majesty's Inspector
Helena Mills	Ofsted Inspector
Ian Morris	Ofsted Inspector
Bruce Goddard	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 2022