

Inspection of Fortis Academy

Aldridge Road, Great Barr, Birmingham, West Midlands B44 8NU

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 October 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Andrew Williams. This school is part of Shaw Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Joanne Morgan, and is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrew Meehan.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a large school that is warm and welcoming. The values of 'character, resilience and aspiration' underpin all that the school does. Pupils feel safe and are well looked after. They know that there is an adult to go to when needed. The school provides strong pastoral care and everyone is welcome here.

Pupils behave well. They appreciate staff being consistently firm and fair. This contributes to a calm and orderly environment throughout. Although pupils say that bullying occasionally happens, they are confident in the school's ability to deal with it.

Pupils study an ambitious curriculum, with most responding well to these demands. Alongside this, the school offers a varied enrichment programme for all, including opportunities in sport, the arts, and curriculum linked visits. The school has established ties with local sports clubs and many pupils particularly enjoy basketball and table tennis. Pupils extend their learning further through special events, such as 'World Culture Day'.

Pupils and sixth-form students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are well prepared to take the next steps in education, employment or training.

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

The school has been through a period of turbulence recently, including changes in staffing. The school has worked relentlessly to address these challenges and create stability. Leaders have significantly improved the school, including in the curriculum, behaviour and attendance. They have successfully built a new culture at the school.

The published GCSE outcomes do not reflect the good quality of education that pupils are now receiving. The curriculum has undergone significant and positive change and is ambitious. The school has prioritised increasing the numbers of pupils that study a language at key stage 4 by adjusting the curriculum lower down the school. For instance, teaching time has been doubled in languages at key stage 3 to help pupils deepen their knowledge and understanding. This has led to more pupils studying the suite of subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate.

Pupils and students in the sixth form benefit from a well-sequenced curriculum. Leaders have thought carefully about the key ideas that pupils need to know and understand over time; pupils can explain these well. The school ensures that topics are frequently revisited so pupils can recall their previous learning. For example, in English, pupils can confidently articulate their current learning and link it to previous work between Victorian novels. English is a real strength at the school.

At times, the work given to some pupils, including those with SEND, is not sufficiently adapted to allow them to understand what they are learning.

Additionally, teachers sometimes move on to new content without checking that pupils have secured their understanding of key ideas fully. On these occasions, gaps can form in pupils' knowledge.

A love of reading is well-promoted, including for students in the sixth form. Pupils access a wide range of high-quality fiction and non-fiction texts. Pupils who have fallen behind with their reading are helped to catch up, including by using phonics. Pupils with English as an additional language receive excellent support.

Pastoral care has a high priority in the school. The school provides effective support to both pupils and their families, including new arrivals to the school. The school strives hard to overcome any barriers pupils may have in attending school and learning. Attendance, which was low last year, has improved rapidly because of leaders' actions. As a result, absence has significantly reduced.

Personal development is well promoted for pupils and students in the sixth form. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is delivered through the school's 'The Edge' programme. Pupils understand important principles, such as building healthy relationships, as well as local risks, such as criminal exploitation. In the sixth form, students continue to build their understanding of PSHE topics as they prepare for adult life.

The school has set high expectations for pupils. Behaviour has much improved in the last twelve months. The school's high expectations are now reflected in pupils' typically positive behaviour and attitudes to learning. Those whose behaviour falls short of the expected standard are supported well to improve. All pupils have their uniform checked on arrival at school at the 'red line'. Pupils do not object to this and willingly go to the 'uniform room' for a change of footwear or to borrow a tie. This is a strong example of where the school's new culture is accepted.

Diligent trustees and local governors make sure that the school is led and managed effectively. The school is very well supported by trust leaders. Staff are proud to work at the school, feel valued and appreciate the school's efforts in managing their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not always accurately identify gaps and errors in pupils' knowledge. This means that some pupils develop misconceptions or their understanding of key content is not secure. The school should ensure that teachers use assessment

precisely to establish what pupils know and can do to help better prepare them for future learning.

- Teaching approaches are not always adapted precisely enough to meet the needs of some pupils, including those with SEND. This means that some pupils do not learn elements of the curriculum as well as their peers. The school should ensure that the needs of all pupils are met consistently and effectively.

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 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	143435
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10290630
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,434
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	168
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andrew Meehan
Headteacher	Andrew Williams
Website	http://fortisacademy.org.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	26 and 27 November 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Shaw Education Trust, a multi-academy trust.
- The school uses three registered alternative providers.
- 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 technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

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 the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with school leaders at all levels. Inspectors also met with staff, the chair of the interim executive board, trust executive leaders including the chief executive officer and the vice-chair of trustees.
- The inspectors conducted deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, science, history, art. 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.
- The inspectors visited a sample of lessons in other subjects, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils and looked at samples of their work.
- 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.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator, members of the learning support team, pastoral team, leaders with oversight of pupils' PSHE provision and careers education and the sixth form.
- A range of documents were checked, including behaviour logs, attendance records, minutes of governors' meetings, school improvement plans and school policies.
- Inspectors held telephone discussions with senior members of staff from registered alternative providers used by the school.
- Inspectors held formal meetings with pupils. Behaviour was observed both in lessons and around the school. Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. They also considered responses to the staff and pupil surveys.
- Inspectors met with students in the sixth form.

Inspection team

Guy Shears, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Caroline Hoddinott	Ofsted Inspector
Nicola Walters	Ofsted Inspector

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