

Inspection of a good school: St Andrew's Academy

St Andrew's View, Breadsall Hilltop, Derby, Derbyshire DE21 4EW

Inspection dates:

16 and 17 July 2024

Outcome

St Andrew's Academy continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is David Braybrooke. This school is part of The 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 (CEO), Jo Morgan, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrew Meehan. There is also a trust national director for special education, Melsa Buxton, who is responsible for this school and other special schools in the trust.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are warmly welcomed and well cared for at St Andrew's Academy. They enjoy attending this very supportive school. Pupils say that they are safe and happy. Parents and carers are very positive about the school. One parent reflected the views of others when they said, 'the staff go above and beyond in this transformative school. I could not have asked for a better place for my child.'

Staff know the pupils well. Relationships are very positive. Pupils know staff will support them to learn and keep them safe. All the staff at the school are highly trained. They are very skilled in meeting the pupils' complex needs.

Staff model the kindness and respect they want pupils to show. As a result, pupils are polite and considerate of each other. Pupils engage well with their learning. They have positive attitudes to their education and socialise well with each other. Pupils are certain that staff will help them with any troubles they may have in their friendship groups.

The 'Learning for Life' programme provides some excellent opportunities to prepare pupils for life beyond school. Staff have high ambitions for all pupils and want the very best outcomes for them.

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

The school's curriculum is ambitious. It is designed to meet pupils' individual needs and provides a broad and enriching experience for them. Each pupil's education, health and

care (EHC) plan is carefully considered and pupils' needs are fully assessed. This allows staff to place pupils in groups that best support their learning. Most pupils are able to access subjects from the national curriculum in a way that is appropriate for them. There is a real sense of the school motto of 'learning together, achieving together'. The clear intent for the curriculum sets out what pupils should learn and when in all subjects. However, this has only recently happened in mathematics. This has led to teachers being uncertain about exactly what knowledge and skills should be taught and when in this subject. As a result, pupils have encountered topics before they have secured the number skills they need to be successful.

Most of the time, pupils benefit from high-quality lessons. They are helped to remember important concepts. They develop good knowledge and skills as they progress through the curriculum. Those pupils who learn in the 'Glens' and 'Highlands' classes are well supported. The communication and sensory needs of these pupils are provided for well. They complete meaningful activities that help them to develop the personal and learning skills they need to meet the outcomes stated in their EHC plans.

Pupils are helped to improve their language and communication. Staff are skilled at helping pupils to get better at explaining how they are feeling. Some pupils learn to do this by using objects or pictures. This helps pupils let staff know what they like and want to do. Because pupils have been helped to communicate their needs, they are less frustrated and so remain calm and focused on their learning. However, the school's ambition for a 'total communication approach' is not yet consistently embedded across all classes. There are some occasions when staff do not develop pupils' communication skills in lessons as well as they could, and some good practice, such as communication profiles, is not yet shared across the school.

There has been careful thought given to how best to develop pupils' ability to read. There is a stepped pre-phonics approach to help pupils understand sounds, words and vocabulary using objects of reference and pictures. This then builds to developing early reading using a suitable phonics scheme. The pupils at the early stages of learning to read do so with increasing accuracy and confidence.

Pupils' personal development is at the forefront of all the school does. Pupils learn about difference. They know this is a positive thing and celebrate it. Pupils know how to keep physically healthy. They learn what makes relationships safe and positive. All pupils are given many rich experiences that develop their 'Learning for Life' skills, such as problem-solving and decision-making. Pupils are very visible and active in the local community, including working in two local cafés.

Older students on the senior site benefit from a high-quality curriculum that helps to make them ready for their adult lives. Staff provide access to high-quality careers education, information and guidance. There are extensive opportunities for work experience with a network of employers and taster days at colleges. Students speak enthusiastically about how much they have gained from these experiences.

The school maintains close contact with families. Many parents appreciate the efforts staff make to keep them updated about their child's learning and welfare, as well as the support the family receives from the school.

Staff value the support leaders give them. They say that leaders care about their well-being and are considerate of their workload. School leaders receive expert support from the trust.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The new mathematics curriculum is not yet fully embedded. As a result, teachers have not always taught the exact knowledge and skills in the order they should have. Pupils are encountering mathematical processes before they have secured the underpinning number skills they need to be successful. This can limit how well they develop their understanding of mathematical concepts. The school should ensure that the implementation of the new mathematics curriculum enables all pupils to build their mathematical knowledge and skills successfully.
- There is some inconsistency regarding the school's ambition for a 'total communication approach'. Not all pupils have communication profiles. Not all benefit from the use of visual representations. On occasions, staff do not take advantage of opportunities to develop pupils' communication skills. The work on pupils' understanding of vocabulary through 'colourful semantics' is in its early stages. As a consequence, for some pupils, their communication skills do not develop as quickly as they might. The school should ensure that the 'total communication approach' is known, understood and practised by all staff, and that every opportunity is taken advantage of to develop pupils' communication skills consistently.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, St Andrew's School to be good in November 2014.

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

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| Unique reference number | 147132 |
| Local authority | Derby |
| Inspection number | 10281528 |
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Academy special converter |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 152 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 36 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of the trust | Andrew Meehan |
| CEO of the trust | Jo Morgan |
| Headteacher | David Braybrooke |
| Website | www.standrewsacademy.co.uk |
| Dates of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- The school is part of The Shaw Education Trust.
- The school provides education to pupils aged 11 to 19 with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including additional needs related to: specific learning difficulty; visual impairment; hearing impairment; multi-sensory impairment; speech, language and communication needs; social, emotional and mental health needs; autism; physical disability; moderate learning difficulty; severe learning difficulty and profound and multiple learning difficulty.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- There is residential provision for pupils on the school site that is operated by the trust.

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 the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team. The lead inspector met with the CEO, the national director for special education and a trustee from the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in communication and reading, mathematics and personal, social, health and economic education. Inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning, and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also visited lessons in the sixth-form provision, lessons designed to develop the 'Learning for Life' skills and class reading sessions. The lead inspector also listened to some pupils read.
- Inspectors considered a wide variety of school documents, including the academy development plan.
- 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.
- Inspectors took note of parents' responses on Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's survey of school staff. Inspectors met with some pupils to discuss different aspects of the school's provision.

Inspection team

Dave Gilkerson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Janis Warren

Ofsted Inspector

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