

The Bulwell Academy

Address: Hucknall Lane, Nottingham, NG6 8AQ

Unique reference number (URN): 145952

Inspection report: 12 May 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	● ● ● ●
Needs attention	● ●
Urgent improvement	

✔ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders have taken decisive action to improve attendance. They carefully analyse information to identify patterns of absence. Support for pupils who do not attend regularly is thorough. Staff work closely with families and other professionals to remove barriers to attending school. This includes thoughtful adaptations for the most vulnerable pupils. Well-planned transitions from primary schools help pupils build positive habits. Leaders reward pupils who attend regularly. This robust approach is improving attendance for all pupils, including those with the lowest attendance.

Behaviour across the school has improved. Leaders have revised behaviour systems and routines for learning. This has established high expectations. As a result, pupils generally behave well. When poor behaviour disrupts lessons, pupils are supported effectively. This means that many pupils can return quickly to their learning. Leaders use the school's targeted provisions to give intensive support when needed. The number of suspensions has fallen. This is because pupils receive effective support to improve their behaviour.

Staff know pupils well. They build positive relationships with pupils. Pupils say bullying is taken seriously. This helps create a positive environment where pupils feel valued and part of the school community. This sense of belonging is encouraging pupils to attend more regularly.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have created an inclusive community. They use a range of strategies to identify pupils' needs. Leaders actively share information with staff. This communication creates an environment where pupils feel valued and supported.

Leaders have high expectations of all pupils. Additional support is specific to pupils' needs. This is particularly the case for reading. Leaders have created alternative pathways based at the school, tailored to the needs of some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This helps ensure that the most vulnerable pupils receive support that helps them grow in confidence over time. Leaders monitor the impact of support and adapt this where appropriate. Staff have received appropriate training to support pupils with barriers to learning. Often, the support that pupils receive reduces these barriers.

Staff build relationships with families so that they can work together to support pupils. They work closely with other professionals to ensure that pupils benefit from personalised support where needed. Alternative provision is used carefully to support some pupils.

Leaders ensure that additional funding is used to support disadvantaged pupils' access to wider opportunities and achievement across the curriculum. Leaders review the impact of this support. The attendance and behaviour of disadvantaged pupils have improved because of this.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have taken decisive action to improve the school. Leaders make decisions that are in the best interests of pupils. They have established a safe, positive environment. This ensures that pupils are increasingly well prepared for their next steps.

Leaders understand the school's strengths and areas for improvement. This has led to positive changes, including better attendance. Leaders keep a close eye on how well things are going. They are supported well by governors, who bring helpful experience and insight. Although much has improved, leaders know there is still more to do to make sure that all pupils attend regularly and achieve as well as they should. Governors and trustees share an accurate picture of the school's needs, the improvements made so far and the priorities that remain. Their combined support, challenge and guidance help leaders to continue to drive the school forward.

All staff, including those who are new to teaching, receive training to support their development. Leaders are considerate of their workload and wellbeing. This means that staff feel well supported. They are proud to work at Bulwell Academy.

Leaders have created effective working relationships with external agencies. They engage positively with parents and carers. Many parents recognise the improvements made in recent years, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The community hub provides opportunities for residents to link with the school. This has had a significant impact on community relations. The community is increasingly supportive of the school.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school provides a broad and well-planned personal development programme which benefits all pupils, including the most vulnerable. The personal, social and health education curriculum builds pupils' knowledge of how to keep safe and healthy. Leaders adapt the curriculum to reflect issues which may impact pupils, such as knife crime. Staff receive appropriate training to deliver more challenging topics. Pupils are developing knowledge which will prepare them for life in modern Britain, including understanding the fundamental British values.

The school's approach to personal development ensures that pupils experience success beyond the classroom. Achievement and progress are celebrated. Leaders carefully plan the wider opportunities and activities available to pupils. This includes opportunities to engage with the local community. Leaders track participation carefully to ensure that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, have access to these opportunities. As a result, most pupils benefit from these experiences.

Leaders listen carefully to pupils' views. Pupil voice is embedded in decision-making and contributes to school improvement. There are many opportunities for pupil leadership, including as prefects and on the school council. This ensures that pupils act as positive role models to each other.

Pupils are proud of their school and feel valued by adults. They speak positively about the changes at their school.

Pupils are well supported by a structured careers programme. They attend events, such as a careers fair, and take part in visits to universities. Increasing numbers of pupils engage in work experience placements. Pupils with additional needs or vulnerabilities are well supported and are prioritised. This means that more pupils secure appropriate next steps.

Leaders prioritise pastoral care. Pupils describe staff as caring, approachable and quick to act when concerns arise. Vulnerable pupils benefit from targeted support and guidance. As a result, pupils are increasingly well prepared for their next steps in education and life.

Needs attention ●

Achievement

Needs attention ●

Pupils' attainment and progress are typically below national averages. Recently, disadvantaged pupils' achievement has been close to national averages in some areas of the curriculum, including English and mathematics. Leaders have begun to put measures in place to strengthen pupils' achievement. However, improvement is not consistent. Pupils with lower attendance do not make suitable progress from their starting points and have gaps in their learning.

Weaker readers receive effective support so that they can catch up with their peers and access the curriculum. However, some pupils struggle to write clearly and accurately across the curriculum. This is because teaching is inconsistent.

Leaders ensure that pupils engage with a range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils are generally well prepared for their next steps, whether in education, employment or training. The proportion of pupils who are in education, employment or training when they have finished their courses has improved.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention ●

Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of the curriculum and teaching. There is variation in how effectively the curriculum is taught. Teachers do not always check pupils' understanding well enough. When this happens, gaps in pupils' learning remain. This includes in foundational skills, such as writing. Consequently, some pupils' progress through the curriculum is hindered.

Teachers consider barriers to learning when they plan lessons. They use strategies that help most pupils, such as support for reading. During lessons, teachers do not consistently make changes that meet the needs of individual pupils. This means that some pupils do not get the precise support they need.

The curriculum builds pupils' knowledge over time. Familiar lesson structures ensure that pupils understand expectations and are ready to learn. Training for teachers is linked to the

school's priorities. Teachers have secure subject knowledge. Most teachers demonstrate tasks to pupils effectively and allow time for independent practice. Pupils are beginning to produce more detailed work.

Support for pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read has been prioritised. There is effective additional support in place for these pupils so that they can make progress from their starting points.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils are proud to be a part of the Bulwell community. Leaders have made significant improvements to the school's culture. Staff have high expectations. Most pupils behave well. This creates an environment that supports learning. Pupils' attendance has improved. This includes the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Those who find regular attendance more difficult are successfully supported.

Leaders identify any barriers pupils may have to their learning. Staff help them overcome these barriers with increasing success. Pastoral support is matched well to pupils' needs. Pupils benefit from positive relationships with caring and committed staff. This ensures that they are known and celebrated as individuals. Pupils know how to report concerns about bullying. They trust that staff will follow the school's procedures to resolve issues. As a result, pupils feel safe and cared for.

Pupils do not achieve in line with national averages across the curriculum. Leaders have taken effective steps to improve the curriculum. These actions are beginning to make a positive difference to pupils' learning. Leaders have introduced clear, consistent routines that help create purposeful classrooms. Pupils settle quickly into their lessons and are ready to learn. However, there are some inconsistencies in how effectively the curriculum is taught. This means that some pupils still do not make as much progress as they could.

The Bulwell pledge passport encourages pupils to participate in a wide range of activities. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils benefit from the wider offer, including participating in trips and extra-curricular activities. Pupils are proud of the leadership responsibilities they have, including acting as school councillors or peer mentors. Pupils can develop their confidence and resilience through opportunities such as The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. They engage with the local community, including through the school's community hub. Pupils receive guidance and opportunities that prepare them increasingly well for their next steps.

Next steps

- Leaders should strengthen the quality of teaching across the curriculum so that pupils typically achieve well in national examinations.
- Leaders should ensure that pupils who have gaps in their basic knowledge and skills receive effective teaching and support to close these gaps.

- Leaders should continue to embed the attendance strategy to improve overall attendance. They should also make sure that their actions result in reducing persistent absence further for all pupil groups.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Creative 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), Nicole McCartney, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Abbie Churton.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with senior leaders, a range of pupils and staff, members of the trust and the CEO during the inspection.

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 approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school makes use of 2 registered alternative provisions and 6 unregistered alternative provisions.

Principal: Matt Irons

Lead inspector:

Helen Loader, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Christine Horrocks, Ofsted Inspector

Sally Wicken, Ofsted Inspector

Matthew Rooney, Ofsted Inspector

Jenny Brown, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 12 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,047

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

1,050

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

53.87%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

1.15%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

20.82%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Well above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	29.3%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	26.2%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	27.5%	45.3%	Below

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	36.1	46.1	Below
2023/24 (final)	34.1	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	38.4	46.3	Below

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.72	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.38	-0.03	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	19.3%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	18.8%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	20.7%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	30.6	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	28.8	34.6	Below
2022/23 (final)	33.3	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.97	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.64	-0.57	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	19.3%	53.1%	-33.8 pp
2023/24 (final)	18.8%	53.1%	-34.4 pp
2022/23 (final)	20.7%	52.4%	-31.7 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	30.6	50.4	-19.8
2023/24 (final)	28.8	50.0	-21.2
2022/23 (final)	33.3	50.3	-17.0

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.97	0.16	-1.14
2022/23 (final)	-0.64	0.17	-0.80

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (revised)	83%	92%	Below
2022 leavers (revised)	88%	93%	Below
2021 leavers (revised)	80%	94%	Below

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	11.0%	8.4%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	13.9%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	14.2%	9.0%	Above

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	33.2%	23.4%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	41.3%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	42.2%	26.5%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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