

# Inspection of The Bulwell Academy

Hucknall Lane, Nottingham, NG6 8AQ

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Inspection dates: 19 and 20 March 2024

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Inadequate

The acting head of school is Matt Irons. 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, Marc Jordan, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Abbie Rumbold. There is also an executive principal, Chris Keen, who is responsible for this school and one other.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Bulwell Academy has been through a period of significant change. During this time, the school has improved. However, it has been an unsettling time for pupils. Many pupils and parents have been frustrated by the many changes to staffing and leadership.

The school has high expectations for how pupils should behave. The majority of pupils are respectful and behave well. They try hard in lessons. Pupils value the 'Bulwell Bucks' they can earn for working hard and demonstrating positive attitudes. However, a minority of pupils cause disruptions to learning. Some are disrespectful to their peers. This poor behaviour means that many pupils do not enjoy school as much as they should.

The curriculum has improved. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), now benefit from an ambitious curriculum designed to give them the knowledge and skills they need to be successful. However, in some areas the curriculum is still developing. Pupils do not all achieve as well as they should.

The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities for pupils to pursue their wider talents and interests. These include sports, performing arts, and self-defence. Pupils benefit from good advice about their next stage in education and future careers.

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

The curriculum at key stage 3 is broad and ambitious. At key stage 4, pupils choose from a wide variety of courses. Most pupils with SEND are well supported to follow the same curriculum as their peers. Those with more complex needs benefit from a variety of ambitious and carefully planned pathways.

The school has worked hard to develop the curriculum. In most subjects, staff have precisely identified the knowledge that pupils should learn. The curriculum plans are sequenced well so that pupils build knowledge as they progress. However, in some subjects, staff are less clear about what pupils need to learn. Sometimes knowledge is not ordered in a way that helps pupils to make links to what they have learned previously.

Most teachers are subject specialists. They explain concepts clearly and plan lesson activities that focus sharply on the important knowledge. They provide opportunities for pupils to recall what they have learned previously. This helps pupils to remember what they have learned and make connections to new knowledge.

Staff have worked collaboratively to develop routines for checking pupils' learning. In some lessons, staff question pupils skilfully to check their understanding and identify misconceptions. When misunderstandings occur, staff can adapt lessons quickly to

make sure that learning is secure. However, in some other lessons, staff do not check pupils' learning well enough. In those cases, gaps in pupils' knowledge are not addressed effectively.

Staff understand the needs of pupils with SEND well. They provide resources and support for these pupils when they need it. Staff quickly identify pupils that need extra help with reading and help them to develop fluency.

Most pupils attend school regularly and arrive on time. However, too many pupils are absent too often or late to school. Too many pupils miss school due to being suspended for poor behaviour. The school has worked hard to support these pupils. Attendance has improved and the number of pupils suspended has fallen.

The school has planned a curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE). Pupils learn about relationships, British values, diversity and equality as well as different faiths and cultures. However, this is not yet delivered effectively to all pupils. As a result, many pupils have gaps in their understanding of these important themes.

Although the school has improved rapidly, many pupils have had a negative experience over recent years. They told inspectors that they do not always feel valued as members of the school community. There are few opportunities for pupils to take responsibility or leadership roles. Most staff are positive about the changes the school has made. They value the support they receive to develop their expertise and manage their workload.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Too many pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, miss too many days of school due to being absent or suspended from school for poor behaviour. Furthermore, a significant minority of pupils miss out on learning opportunities because they do not regularly arrive at school on time. As a result, these pupils do not benefit from the school's curriculum as well as they should. The school needs to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly, and on time.
- In a number of subjects, the curriculum is not well planned. In some subjects, the school has not identified the important knowledge that pupils will learn. In some other subjects, the plans are not sequenced well enough. This means that pupils do not build knowledge or develop a depth of understanding in those subjects. The school needs to make sure that the curriculum identifies what pupils will learn and when they will learn it, in all subjects, so that all pupils gain the knowledge and skills they need to achieve well.

- The curriculum is not delivered consistently well across the school. Some lessons do not focus well enough on the knowledge that pupils need to learn. Sometimes staff do not check pupils' understanding closely enough or adapt lessons to make sure that all pupils learn and remember the important knowledge. Pupils do not always receive feedback from staff to address misconceptions or help them improve their work. The school needs to make sure that all staff deliver the curriculum well to meet the needs of all pupils.
- The curriculum for pupils' broader personal development is not delivered effectively. It does not support pupils to learn about British values, equality, or different faiths and cultures in sufficient depth. Some pupils do not benefit from age-appropriate PSHE. There are few opportunities for pupils to take roles of responsibility or contribute to the school or wider community. As a result, pupils are not as well prepared for their future lives as they should be. The school needs to make sure that the curriculum provides opportunities for all pupils to become responsible, respectful, active citizens so that they can contribute positively to society.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	145952
<b>Local authority</b>	Nottingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10302548
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1070
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair</b>	Abbie Rumbold
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Marc Jordan
<b>Principal</b>	Chris Keen (Executive principal), Matt Irons (acting head of school)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://bulwellacademy.co.uk/">http://bulwellacademy.co.uk/</a>
<b>Date(s) of previous inspection</b>	7 and 8 June 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the Creative Education Trust.
- The school appointed a new acting head of school in February 2024.
- The school temporarily closed the sixth form in September 2023.
- The school uses five registered and three unregistered 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 approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the executive principal, the acting head of school, and other school leaders.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from Creative Education Trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, modern foreign languages, and 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.
- Inspectors discussed the curriculum and visited lessons in a number of other subjects.
- 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 met with pupils from a range of year groups including pupils with SEND to discuss their experiences of the school. Inspectors also considered the views of pupils that responded to the online survey.
- Inspectors met with a range of teaching and non-teaching staff. Inspectors also considered the views of staff that responded to an online survey.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View.

### **Inspection team**

John Spragg, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Julie Sheppard	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Rhatigan	Ofsted Inspector
Teresa Roche	Ofsted Inspector

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