

Inspection of The Dorcan Academy

St Paul's Drive, Covingham, Swindon, Wiltshire SN3 5DA

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 July 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires Improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel safe and welcome at The Dorcan Academy. They have warm relationships with staff who they know want the best for them. Leaders expect all members of the school community to be kind, show respect and work hard. Most do.

Leaders' high aspirations are evident in the ambitious curriculum and the positive school environment. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere in which pupils can focus on learning.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils listen to one another courteously. They are considerate of their peers. Bullying is not common. It is usually dealt with well when it is reported to staff. However, there are incidents that are not reported and so action cannot be taken.

Pupils can try new activities and develop their existing interests. Sporting clubs encourage those who play for fun as well as those who are keen to compete. Leaders ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged can take part in these. Pupils appreciate the range of opportunities that they have. Many of them take part in extra-curricular activities.

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

The curriculum is ambitious and broad for all pupils. Most pupils with SEND study the full curriculum and attend mainstream lessons. A very small number of pupils with SEND follow a slightly different curriculum which meets their needs well. More pupils in Year 10 now study the subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). This means that a greater proportion of pupils continue with a strong academic curriculum.

Leaders know where learning is less secure due to the pandemic. They have adjusted the curriculum to make sure that pupils have the essential knowledge and skills they need. Teachers check that pupils understand their learning. They expect pupils to work hard to improve. Most are keen to do so and are resilient when challenged.

Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Their explanations are clear. They teach pupils the vocabulary they need to succeed. Teaching activities are well matched to what pupils can do and enable them to deepen their knowledge. Some support given to pupils with SEND is not effective in meeting their needs. However, most pupils with SEND get the help they need and thrive.

Leaders prioritise reading. Pupils read widely and often. The books that all pupils read support other aspects of the curriculum, promote reading for pleasure and help

pupils understand the experiences of those from different backgrounds. Those who do not read well enough get help to improve.

Pupils behave well. They focus on their learning. Pupils know the consequences of not meeting the high expectations of them. Disruption to learning is rare. Rewards recognise the good conduct of the majority. Pupils are polite and considerate.

The personal development curriculum is strong, particularly in key stage three. Pupils value what they learn about staying safe and maintaining good physical and mental health. They enjoy learning about those who have different beliefs and lifestyles to their own. Pupils know what it means to be an active citizen and many demonstrate this through pupil leadership roles.

The careers programme raises pupils' aspirations. Pupils know about local employment and apprenticeship opportunities and colleges. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Leaders accurately identify areas of strength and those that need further development. Their actions improve the school. Leaders support staff with their workloads and professional development. Trustees' challenge and support aligns to the school vision. Whilst most parents agree that the school lets them know how their child is doing, a minority feel that their concerns are not handled properly.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders check that adults working or volunteering at the school have the necessary checks to ensure their suitability.

All staff are confident about how they would report a concern that a pupil may be at risk. They know what signs they are looking out for and are vigilant. Leaders take prompt action to secure help for those who need it.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some parents and pupils are not confident that all concerns they raise are dealt with effectively. This means that some concerns persist. Leaders need to build the confidence of parents and pupils that their concerns are acted on.
- Some pupils with SEND do not always receive the support they need. This means that they do not always make as much progress as they could. Leaders need to make sure that the support given meets the needs of all pupils.

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	137684
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	10229105
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	713
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Robert Linnegar
Headteacher	Sherryl Bareham
Website	www.dorcan.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 November 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses one registered and one unregistered alternative provider.

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 headteacher, senior leaders, trustees and other school leaders including the special educational needs and/or disabilities co-ordinator.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, physical education, history and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a selection of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leader, examined school records and discussed safeguarding cases.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Parent View, and the views of staff and pupils in Ofsted’s online surveys. Relatively few pupils responded to the online survey so inspectors held additional meetings to seek their views.
- An inspector also spoke to alternative providers used by the school and local authority staff.

Inspection team

Sarah Favager-Dalton, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Mike Foley	Ofsted Inspector
Matthew Collins	Ofsted Inspector
John Weeds	Ofsted Inspector

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