

City Academy

Address: 23 Langley Walk, Birmingham, West Midlands, B15 2EF

Unique reference number (URN): 148187

Inspection report: 10 February 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 

Safeguarding, inclusion and pastoral staff are all involved in the school's strategy to improve attendance. This means that each pupil's own barriers to attending school regularly are known and addressed. As a result, attendance has improved and is now very close to national averages. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is above national averages. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has also reduced.

Through the school's 'CORE' values and the 'City Way', leaders have ensured that everyone understands the high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils know that bullying and discrimination are not accepted here. The school is a calm and purposeful place to be. Most pupils demonstrate respect in their interactions with each other. Many greet staff and visitors with commendable politeness and maturity.

Lessons are typically free from disruptive behaviour, and pupils focus well on their learning. Pupils follow the expected routines when moving around the site and shared spaces. They socialise appropriately at break and lunchtime. There has been a notable reduction in the number of suspensions issued, including for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. The number of 'positive behaviour logs' has increased, and pupils value how making the right choices is recognised through the school's rewards system.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

There are clear systems in place to identify and track the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Information is appropriately shared with teaching staff. Leaders know the pupils well and make sure that there is tailored support in place for any pupils who are known to social care. The school strategy to support disadvantaged pupils has identified the specific challenges these pupils face. It has resulted in improved outcomes and attendance for these pupils, as well as for those with SEND.

Pupils who are new to the country and who speak English as an additional language follow the well-structured 'CORE Hello' programme, which helps them to learn English. It also develops confidence for living in British society. Pupils who speak English as an additional language improve their English rapidly because of effective intervention and support. For example, they benefit from using first language subtitles on the board in lessons to clarify meaning.

The school has effective working relationships with external partners that support the progress and wider development of pupils. Use of alternative provision is thoughtful and in the best interests of pupils.

Staff receive useful training on how to support pupils who may face barriers to their learning or wellbeing. However, some teaching staff are not consistent in how they adapt learning for these pupils in lessons.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Pupils' best interests are at the heart of decisions made by leaders at all levels. There is a shared commitment to social justice and inclusion. All pupils are warmly welcomed by the school. Parents and carers are encouraged to get involved with the school, from joining tours to attending the recently established parent forum.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of what is working well and what needs to be improved. Through the trust, there has been an increase in leadership capacity within the school. This year, school leaders have rightly placed an increased emphasis on improving the consistency of education that pupils receive at the school and their achievement. Leaders are taking quick and effective action. They know that there is more still to be done before this meets their desired standard. The improvement in attendance and behaviour is a notable point of celebration in the effectiveness of leaders' actions.

Governance is robust. There are effective systems and checks in place to ensure that all statutory responsibilities are met. For example, internal monitoring of safeguarding by the school and trust is supplemented by regular external reviews. Through the introduction of the Education Advisory Board, the trust has ensured that there is greater expertise supporting scrutiny of improvements at the school. Leaders are held to account rigorously, but also supported well.

Staff are proud to work here. They benefit from a comprehensive professional learning programme that supports their current practice and future aspirations. Leaders are considerate of their workload and wellbeing. This is a school where everyone cares for each other.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The pastoral care of pupils is a strength of the school. Pupils are known and valued as individuals. Staff are committed to helping pupils overcome any barriers they may face, develop confidence in themselves and thrive in the future.

The personal development programme is comprehensive and coherently planned. Leaders have considered carefully the school's context, ensuring that pupils learn about important topics, such as healthy relationships, mental health and money management, as well as risks pupils may face within the wider community. Pupils see topics such as internet safety as being highly relevant to their lives and experiences.

Pupils learn about what it means to be an active member of modern British society through the personal development programme and activities linked to the school's 'CORE' values. They also learn to celebrate the diversity of cultures and faiths within their school community. Most pupils demonstrate this understanding in their day-to-day conduct around school.

The school's careers education programme is comprehensive and starts in Year 7. Pupils benefit from a range of opportunities to learn about different options for the future. The school is currently working on increasing the number of pupils who engage with work experience. Older pupils are confident when talking about their post-16 choices because

they receive the useful information they need. There has been a notable increase in the number of pupils who stay in education, employment or training after they leave school.

All pupils are able to access a broad range of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities. Participation rates are higher for pupils who may face barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing than for other pupils. There is a commitment to ensure that all pupils benefit from the personal and cultural development gained through opportunities such as outdoor education trips and theatre visits.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Although pupils' achievement is improving at City Academy, over time, a number of pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This limits how well prepared they are for their next steps in education, employment or training. Over time, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils has improved and is now in line with the national averages for disadvantaged pupils.

The consistency with which pupils are enabled to build up their knowledge across subjects is varied. In some subjects, pupils have a secure level of knowledge. However, in other subjects, some pupils do not have a secure understanding of key curriculum knowledge and skills.

Leaders ensure that pupils close any gaps in their reading skills that they may join the school with. Those pupils who are new to the country and who speak English as an additional language make rapid progress in learning English. They study a suite of appropriate qualifications that set them up well for the future.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

The school has an appropriate, well-sequenced curriculum in place. However, it is not implemented to a consistent standard in and between subjects. This means that pupils have a mixed learning experience as they move through their day in school.

Leaders know that the effectiveness of teaching remains a work in progress. They have identified the teaching strategies that should be used by staff in lessons, but this work is still in the early stages of becoming widespread practice. Some staff use these approaches with confidence and consistency, which helps pupils to learn well. However, this is not always the case.

Teachers share their subject knowledge with clarity, helping pupils to understand new and more complex ideas. However, there are times when teachers do not check effectively whether all pupils have understood the key knowledge needed to move on to the next step in their learning.

Staff are provided with useful information about how to adapt learning to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, there are times when

some staff do not use the identified strategies effectively.

There is effective support in place for pupils who are not yet confident, fluent readers. However, the school's work to close gaps in writing and numeracy is at a much earlier stage of implementation.

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

Pupils are made to feel welcome here, whatever their background or whenever they join the school. They are proud of the rich diversity of their community. Pupils are cared for and feel safe in school. They know that any concerns or bullying will be dealt with effectively.

The school day starts with warm interactions between pupils and staff at the school gate. These continue throughout the day until pupils are on their way home. The school's high expectations of respectful behaviour, the 'City Way', are supported by clear routines. These expectations are well understood by pupils, and most reach this standard with little prompting needed. Pupils talk about how behaviour has improved and is much less likely to disrupt their learning now. Furthermore, the actions of leaders have ensured that pupils typically attend school regularly.

Pupils do not benefit from a consistent quality of education. Their learning experience varies across the day, and so they learn better in some lessons than others. This is why some pupils do not achieve the outcomes they are capable of in all subjects. However, disadvantaged pupils achieve in line with others nationally. Those who are new to the country are supported very well and make rapid progress in learning English.

Year 11 pupils feel well supported in preparing for their upcoming examinations, including through the 'impress the examiner' sessions. They make informed choices about their next steps in education, training or employment.

There are many opportunities for pupils to attend clubs, including retro video gaming, baking, choir and various sports. Pupils appreciate the trips they can go on, for example the Year 7 residential. Many are keen to take on roles of responsibility, including as student leaders. They wear their high-visibility vests with great pride and support their peers well.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is implemented more consistently so that pupils build the knowledge and skills they need to achieve successful outcomes across the curriculum.
- Leaders should ensure that all teaching staff have the skills to check how much pupils understand at the point of learning and to make appropriate adaptations in response.

- Leaders should ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from greater consistency between lessons in how well learning is adapted to meet their needs.
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About this inspection

This school is part of CORE 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), Joanne Tyler, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Susan Wain.

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.

Inspectors spoke with the interim executive headteacher, interim head of school, senior leaders, other leaders and staff at the school. Inspectors also met with trust leaders, including the Group CEO and CEO, as well as the chair of the trust board.

Inspectors visited lessons. They looked at pupils' work. They spoke with pupils at different times across the school day and observed behaviour in lessons and around the school site.

To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys. They considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text comments, as well as communication to Ofsted received 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.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The headteacher was absent at the time of the inspection. An interim executive headteacher, Raj Mann, holds substantive responsibility for the school in her absence.

The school currently uses 4 registered providers of alternative provision.

Headteacher: Rebecca Bakewell

Lead inspector:

Nicola Beech, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Sarah Steer, Ofsted Inspector

Sara Berry, His Majesty's Inspector

Andrew Washbourne, His Majesty's 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 10 February 2026

School and pupil context**Total pupils**

615

Well below 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

750

Well below 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: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

64.72%

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

0.49%

Well 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

12.36%

Close to 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 (revised)	23.3%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	27.2%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	16.7%	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 (revised)	36.4	46.0	Below
2023/24 (final)	34.7	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	28.6	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)	-0.47	-0.03	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	-1.16	-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 (revised)	24.0%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	17.0%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	11.7%	25.2%	Below

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 (revised)	35.2	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	29.9	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	25.6	35.0	Below

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)	-0.62	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-1.27	-0.57	Below

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 (revised)	24.0%	53.1%	-29.1 pp
2023/24 (final)	17.0%	53.1%	-36.1 pp
2022/23 (final)	11.7%	52.4%	-40.8 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 (revised)	35.2	50.4	-15.2
2023/24 (final)	29.9	50.0	-20.2
2022/23 (final)	25.6	50.3	-24.7

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)	-0.62	0.16	-0.78
2022/23 (final)	-1.27	0.17	-1.43

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 (provisional)	80%	91%	Below
2022 leavers (revised)	91%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	89%	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 (2 term)	10.0%	8.1%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	12.4%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	12.4%	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 (2 term)	31.4%	21.9%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	37.8%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	37.2%	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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
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