

Inspection of Esteem Valley Academy

Bennerley Avenue, Cotmanhay, Ilkeston, Derbyshire DE7 8PF

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 July 2025

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

The headteacher of this school is Kevin Wildrianne. This school is part of Esteem multi-academy trust. This means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Julian Scholefield, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Kathryn Boulton.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school caters for pupils who are at risk of being, or have already been, excluded from mainstream education. All pupils have experienced significant disruption to their education. The school is ambitious for pupils to embrace a new challenge and learn from past mistakes. This ambition is reflected in the school's vision to create a 'culture of success'.

The school has high expectations for pupils to achieve as well as possible. These expectations are realised through the increasing number of pupils who gain GCSE and other qualifications by the end of Year 11. A growing number achieve a successful return to mainstream schools or progress to further education, training or employment.

Positive, trusting relationships are at the heart of the school. The system of pastoral support, provided through 'personal coaches', is a notable strength. The care and support provided by the school enable pupils to feel safe and happy. Pupils' social and emotional needs are very well understood and nurtured.

The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Most pupils live up to these expectations. The school provides support for behaviour through the trained staff engagement team.

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

The school has reviewed and strengthened the curriculum since the last inspection. The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced, according to the age and circumstances of the pupils. English and mathematics are prioritised for pupils of all ages. This includes children in the early years. The school has broadened the scope of subjects and courses available for older pupils. The introduction of the 'evolve' curriculum, comprising music and media, has been a popular addition to the curriculum offer. This area of the curriculum is well resourced and carefully selected to reflect local employment opportunities. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps.

The school has identified a significant change in the profile of its pupils since the last inspection. In the primary phase, there are many more pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who now attend the school. This includes some pupils who are awaiting placements at specialist settings more suited to their needs. The school has responded to this challenge by creating the primary 'discovery' pathway for younger pupils with SEND. Pupils in the 'discovery' pathway learn an adapted curriculum matched to their needs.

Thorough assessments of pupils' needs and abilities begin as soon as they join the school. This information is carefully used to identify pupils' needs and to inform the curriculum, teaching and routes to qualifications. Pupils are provided with individual support plans relating to attendance, behaviour or learning, according to their identified needs. All of this information is used by the school to check how well pupils are progressing through the curriculum and to quickly address any concerns.

Staff have secure subject knowledge in the areas they teach. Pupils learn in small groups. They benefit from a high degree of adult support. Staff know pupils well and, in the main, teaching is adapted to meet pupils' needs. Staff regularly check pupils' understanding in lessons. On occasion, the school does not ensure that the checks made on pupils' learning identify what pupils know and can do. This prevents some pupils from learning all that they could.

The school prioritises reading. There is a systematic approach to the teaching of early reading and phonics. Pupils who need help with reading receive suitable support from trained staff. They develop increasing fluency and confidence in reading.

The majority of pupils respond well to the school's high expectations of how they should behave. There is a well-designed system of rewards and incentives for good behaviour. The school closely analyses incidents of poor behaviour to understand, and respond to, any patterns or trends. Suspensions are reducing over time. However, there are occasions when the school's behaviour expectations are applied inconsistently, which can lead to disruption in lessons. Some pupils continue to display challenging behaviours as a result of their personal circumstances or additional needs. Sometimes, some pupils do not respond to routines or behave respectfully, and this affects learning.

Systems for encouraging regular attendance are strong. Consequently, the school's rates of attendance are improving. Pupils who had previously spent time out of education now attend regularly.

The school promotes pupils' wider personal development well. The personal development programme prepares pupils to fulfil positive roles in society. They have a growing awareness of healthy lifestyles and relationships, and the importance of respect.

Leadership at all levels, including governance, are strong. There is a united vision and ambition for pupils to achieve as highly as possible. Staff are deeply committed to the school and its values. They receive effective support and care for their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On occasion, the school's checks on pupils' learning do not fully identify the security of some pupils' knowledge and understanding. This limits some pupils' ability to embed and apply a depth of knowledge and skills. The school should ensure that checks on

pupils' understanding enable pupils to be secure in their learning so that they can develop detailed knowledge and skills across the curriculum.

- Sometimes, there are inconsistencies in how the school applies its strategies for managing pupils' behaviour. On such occasions, some pupils do not live up to the school's high expectations for behaviour. The school should ensure that staff receive support to consistently apply the agreed approach to behaviour incidents, so that all pupils are able to demonstrate the positive behaviours that the school expects of them.

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

Unique reference number	146055
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10347676
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	109
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kathryn Boulton
CEO of the trust	Julian Scholefield
Headteacher	Kevin Wildrianne
Website	www.esteemvalleyacademy.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	27 and 28 June 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Esteem Valley Academy is an alternative provision school that provides education for young people who are at risk of, or who have been permanently excluded from, mainstream education.
- In September 2024, the school introduced two curriculum pathways for primary-age pupils. The 'discovery' pathway caters for pupils with SEND. The 'explorers' pathway caters for all other primary-age pupils.
- At the time of the inspection, there were few children on roll in the early years foundation stage. Consequently, inspectors have not given a grade for the early years provision, in order to avoid identifying individual children.
- The school provides education across three sites. Pupils in the early years and primary phases and key stage 3 are taught at the Bennerley Avenue site. Pupils in key stage 4 receive education at the Sawley site, located at Mikado Road, Sawley, Long Eaton, Derbyshire NG10 3GN. Some pupils receive teaching and support from the school's Assessment and Progression Team. This consists of a blended curriculum, combining

one-to-one support and access to both internal and external alternative provision. This third site is located at Windsor Crescent, Kirk Hallam, Derbyshire DE7 4HD.

- 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 school makes use of 15 unregistered alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 headteacher and other senior and curriculum leaders. The lead inspector held discussions with the chair of the local governing body and representatives of the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and the school's 'evolve' music and media curriculum. 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 also discussed the curriculum, looked at samples of pupils' work and spoke to groups of pupils about their learning in some other subjects.
- Inspectors observed behaviour in lessons and at other times around school.
- Inspectors visited all three sites to evaluate the provision across the whole school.
- 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.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

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