

Inspection of Leycroft Academy

Gressel Lane, Birmingham B33 9UE

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 May 2024

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Patrick Jones. This school is part of Forward 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, Simon Dilkes, and is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Kate Canty.

What is it like to attend this school?

New leaders have raised the expectations for what pupils can achieve at Leycroft Academy. They are creating a new curriculum to meet the school's ambition to 'enable pupils to understand the wider world around them and discover the talents within'. However, this is in the early stages. There is still more work needed to ensure that all pupils' learning needs are well understood and supported.

Relationships between pupils and staff are positive. Staff are caring and supportive and want the best for pupils. Pupils are safe. Staff know how to quickly raise any concerns.

The school has recently introduced newly agreed systems to support pupils' communication needs. Staff are supported by trained 'communication champions' who support in identifying systems for individual pupils. However, some staff do not always implement the agreed strategies. This means that pupils are not always able to communicate what they need. Consequently, this leads to low-level behaviours in classrooms, as sometimes pupils become unsettled.

Leaders are ambitious for what they want pupils to achieve in their personal development. This is beginning to be realised. Pupils celebrate a wide range of festivals. They learn about different faiths and religions. Special visitors come into school. Plans are now in place to give pupils experiences within the wider community.

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

There are many positive changes happening at Leycroft Academy. Since the school opened, there have been several significant changes to leadership. For a period, this slowed the impact of the school's improvement journey. Nevertheless, the trust has now appointed a new school leadership team. The newly appointed headteacher has accurately identified the right areas for development and is working at pace to address these.

The school has recently introduced curriculum pathways, including in the early years. These are designed to support pupils with similar needs to learn together. The curriculum is also currently undergoing significant changes. Some parts of the curriculum are at the early stages of development. All of this means that the school has not yet identified the essential knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn and in what order in all parts of the curriculum. Pupils are not yet building their knowledge and skills over time. Leaders know this and are currently working to improve this.

In lessons, there is variability in how well staff implement the curriculum. Some staff understand the academic needs of pupils well. They also understand the specific identified needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Lessons are then planned to allow pupils to build on their academic knowledge and skills

while supporting their specialist needs. However, this is not the case in all lessons, including in the early years. Where this is the case, pupils are not always given learning tasks to secure important knowledge. Learning activities provide pupils with some experiences but do not identify what important knowledge and skills they will be learning. Subsequently, where this is the case, pupils' learning is limited.

The school has rightly prioritised teaching pupils how to read. A new systematic phonics scheme has recently been introduced. All pupils are taught how to read daily. This is beginning to have a positive impact. Pupils who are not yet ready for the new phonics programme are taught using daily 'listen and learn' boxes. Pupils are taught how to sustain their attention and how to identify sounds in the environment. Consequently, this prepares pupils well to access the phonics programme alongside their peers.

The school has recently introduced the 'shine' approach. This supports staff in understanding and positively responding to pupils' behavioural needs. A team has been created to implement this new initiative. The team understands how pupils' behaviour can be a form of communication. They analyse patterns and trends and share strategies with staff to support pupils. This new initiative, alongside others, is beginning to show some positive improvements. However, staff do not always implement these as agreed. Consequently, leaders do not yet have a clear enough view of how well new initiatives and changes are being implemented across school.

Pupils have a growing number of experiences to support their personal development. This includes the recently introduced 'life-skills room'. As part of this programme, pupils are taught important skills such as how to make a bed independently. In the early years, changes to the indoor and outdoor learning environment are beginning to support pupils to make independent choices. Pupils are taught how to stay safe online. They can name a trusted adult.

The trust and school leaders have a sharp focus on improving attendance. Although a number of pupils do not attend school regularly enough, the school has supported families in securing regular attendance for their children.

The trust, alongside the local academy council, offers appropriate support to school leaders. Careful consideration has been given to staff workload and well-being during this period of change. Many parents are supportive of the positive changes.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff do not always implement the agreed communication and behaviour systems in their classrooms and across school. This means that pupils are not always able

to communicate what they need. This leads to pupils quickly becoming unsettled and not responding positively to their learning. The school should ensure that all staff have the necessary skills and knowledge to consistently implement agreed communication and behaviour strategies across all classrooms and all areas of school.

- The curriculum is not developed well enough in all subject areas. Some parts of the curriculum are also at the early stages of development. The school has not yet identified the essential component knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn and in what order. This means that pupils are not building their knowledge or skills over time. The school should ensure that they clearly identify the specific knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn and remember in all areas of the curriculum.
- Staff do not always implement the curriculum well enough to support pupils' learning. Learning activities provide pupils with some experiences but do not always build effectively on what pupils know and can do. This limits pupils' learning. The school should ensure that the work teachers give to pupils precisely identifies the important knowledge and skills and enables them to build on their learning.
- The school has recently introduced a number of new initiatives, including changes to the curriculum. Leaders do not yet have a clear view of how well new initiatives and changes are being implemented across the school. Leaders need to continue their work on checking and accurately evaluating how well initiatives and changes are being implemented across school.

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	148653
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10322922
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	169
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kate Canty
CEO of the trust	Simon Dilkes
Headteacher	Patrick Jones
Website	www.leycroft.fet.ac
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Leycroft Academy was previously a small, specially resourced provision for pupils with autism and part of another school. The provision moved to the current location in 2015 and pupil numbers have grown significantly. In September 2021, the trust separated the two settings and created the Leycroft Academy special school.
- Since the school opened, there have been several significant changes to leadership. The headteacher joined the school in February 2023. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2023. Two new assistant headteachers have also recently joined. A new chair of the local academy council was appointed in September 2023.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. The primary area of need includes autism. Pupils also have associated needs such as speech, language, communication and interaction and sensory needs.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, the chair of trustees, the chair of the local governing board, additional representatives from the trust, subject coordinators, teachers and pupils. They also talked informally with passenger assistants, drivers and staff.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative from the local authority and a behaviour consultant.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, communication and interaction, mathematics, humanities and personal, social, health and economic education. 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.
- An inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- 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 responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. This included free-text comments. Inspectors also looked at responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents provided by the school, including the school's self-evaluation, policies and curriculum documents.

Inspection team

Anna Vrahimi, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Dawn White	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Spilsbury	Ofsted Inspector
Kirsty Foulkes	His Majesty's Inspector

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