

Inspection of Mark Hall Academy

First Avenue, Harlow CM17 9LR

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 March 2025, and 25 April 2025

The quality of education **Requires Improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Matt Carter. This school is part of BMAT Education, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Helena Mills, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Paul Drayton.

What is it like to attend this school?

Mark Hall Academy has created a clear vision built on the school's values of 'determination, confidence and respect'. Pupils demonstrate these values in their conduct around the school. They are respectful, kind and polite to each other. The school has high expectations for pupil behaviour and pupils appreciate this clarity. Consequently, the school is calm and orderly and pupils can learn without disruption.

There are warm relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils feel safe and there is strong and effective pastoral care. This helps those who need emotional and welfare support to engage positively with the life of the school. The school offers a range of enrichment opportunities. Pupils can choose from experiences, such as music, drama and sporting clubs. These help pupils broaden their skills and develop their confidence. Pupils talk about how much they value these experiences.

The school and trust have a shared vision for the quality of education provided to all pupils. This has driven the recent improvements made to curriculum and the training provided to staff. The school recognises the need to further raise expectations and the achievement of pupils, so that they achieve stronger outcomes and are prepared for their next stage of education or training.

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

The school has revised the curriculum to ensure that it is broad and balanced. Subjects have set out what pupils will learn and in what order to enable pupils to build their knowledge and understanding. However, the methods chosen to deliver the curriculum are not always well matched to the curriculum aims or sufficiently adapted to meet the needs of pupils. As a result, pupils do not learn the intended curriculum well over time.

The checks that teachers make on learning do not accurately identify what pupils know and can do. As a result, misconceptions continue for some pupils and others find it difficult to recall previous learning. Pupils without a secure knowledge and understanding of the work to date find it difficult to learn subsequent content and are not well prepared for their qualifications.

The school accurately identifies the individual needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school provides additional support for these pupils to learn the curriculum. However, the weaknesses in the curriculum implementation impact all pupils. As a result, pupils with SEND, like their peers, do not learn the curriculum as well as they should.

The school promotes a love of reading. The trust has supported the school to develop its reading curriculum. Pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read are identified quickly and are given the support to build their reading accuracy and confidence.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and work well together in lessons. The school promotes the importance of good attendance and takes effective action to work with

families to address concerns. Despite this, for some pupils, absence from school is higher than it should be. The school has improved its systems for engaging with parents and carers. This is starting to have a positive impact on improving the attendance of these pupils.

The provision to support pupils' personal development is comprehensive. Through this, pupils learn about healthy and respectful relationships, the responsible use of social media and online safety. Pupils study a carefully crafted programme that prepares them well for life in modern Britain. The school has developed a very strong careers programme that includes meaningful work experience.

Leaders are not complacent about the improvements required to the implementation of the curriculum. They have considered the workload and well-being of staff when planning changes. Staff appreciate leaders' open-door policy and the training that they receive to develop their own practice. The trust provides highly effective challenge and support to the school. Consequently, the school has clear understanding of the relative strengths and priority areas for improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not implemented as consistently well as intended. This means that pupils do not have opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding as well as they should. The school and trust should ensure that the curriculum is implemented effectively to ensure that pupils achieve well.
- Assessment in the classroom does not help staff to identify what pupils know and understand well enough. This means that pupils do not receive the support or challenge that they need to deepen their learning or address gaps in knowledge. The school should make sure that assessment is used effectively to check pupils' understanding and that the curriculum is adapted accordingly in response.

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	148423
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10378586
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	860
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Drayton
CEO of the trust	Helena Mills
Headteacher	Matt Carter
Website	www.markhallacademy.org
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 November 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the BMAT Education trust.
- The school makes use of one registered and two unregistered providers of alternative provision.
- 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 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.

- The inspection started on 4 March 2025. Inspectors returned on 24 April 2025 to gather additional evidence in line with [Ofsted inspections and visits: Deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence](#) policy.
- 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, geography and religious 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.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- 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 scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school and priorities for improvement.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, a selection of subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the local governing board. They also spoke with a representative from the trust.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation, including records related to attendance, behaviour and pupil movement.
- The inspectors considered the views of pupils and staff, including through their responses to Ofsted's online surveys. They also considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text responses.

Inspection team

Sara Berry, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Paul Williams	His Majesty's Inspector
Robert Grice	His Majesty's Inspector
Claire Robins	Ofsted Inspector
Polly Lankester	Ofsted Inspector
Cathy Barr	Ofsted Inspector

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