

Inspection of Venture Academy

Stratford Road, Henley-in-Arden, Warwickshire B95 6AD

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Relationships between staff and pupils are a strength of the school. Pupils are well cared for. Staff do all they can to make sure that pupils are happy and feel safe. Pupils say that there is always an adult to talk to if they have any worries or need help to manage their feelings. One pupil summed up the views of others by saying that staff have a 'unique way' of helping them.

Staff expect pupils to behave well. Some pupils sometimes struggle to manage their emotions and behaviour. Staff manage incidents of challenging behaviour quickly and calmly. Pupils say that when bullying happens, adults deal with it well.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils and want them to be well prepared for their next steps. Pupils enjoy a broad curriculum and can work towards a range of qualifications. However, leaders have not ensured that the curriculum is planned well enough across key stages and subjects. This means that pupils do not build the knowledge they need to make as much progress as they could.

Pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to learn outdoors, to go on educational visits and to take on responsibilities, including as a member of the school council.

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

Leaders know pupils' needs well. Most pupils come to this school because they have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Leaders prioritise building pupils' trust, confidence and willingness to get involved with learning effectively. Leaders make regular checks on how well pupils' needs are being met. Leaders provide effective training for staff to ensure that strategies to manage behaviour are used consistently throughout the school. Pupils trust staff and most respond well to the decisions staff make.

Pupils experience a broad curriculum. Leaders fulfil pupils' wishes to study subjects even when they are not part of the core offer. Currently, curriculum planning is at an early stage of development. The specific knowledge that pupils must learn has not been determined in sufficient detail for teachers to know what should be taught and when. Plans are not sequenced well enough to ensure that pupils can build on what has been learned before. This means teachers cannot check how well pupils are progressing in each subject.

Staff have had little training around the curriculum and how it should be delivered until recently. This means that some staff do not have the knowledge they need to deliver the curriculum as well as possible. Leaders are addressing this and some subject-specific training, including in English and mathematics, has already taken place.

Pupils at the early stages of learning to read do not have the knowledge they need to read fluently and accurately. New approaches to improve how well pupils learn to read and to build pupils' love for reading have recently been introduced. Pupils now have daily opportunities to read and to listen to adults reading.

Most pupils respond well to the school's reward system and work hard. Some pupils do not engage well in lessons. They are not sufficiently well supported to complete what they have been asked to do, so do not work as hard as they could. This limits the amount of progress these pupils make.

The school's work to support pupils' personal development is a strength. Most pupils are very respectful of differences and have a good understanding of discrimination and the harm it causes. Pupils learn about the importance of healthy eating and keeping physically and mentally well. Pupils receive independent careers advice and find out about a wide range of opportunities for their next steps in further education or work.

The local advisory board and the multi-academy trust board are ambitious for the school. They know the school's strengths and what needs to improve. Governors provide an appropriate balance of challenge and support. They are mindful of staff workload and well-being. Staff enjoy working at the school and feel valued.

Parents are happy with the school and how it supports their children.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a strong safeguarding culture. Leaders ensure that staff receive high-quality training. Staff know how to report concerns and are encouraged to report any concerns they have about a pupil's welfare or well-being, no matter how small. Leaders are tenacious in their drive to make sure that pupils and their families get the help they need.

Staff are very aware of the additional vulnerabilities and behaviours that might put pupils at an increased risk. Leaders ensure pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe. This includes learning about safe relationships, using the internet safely and the risks associated with gangs and knife crime.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not sequenced well enough in most subjects. This means that teachers do not know what should be taught and when. Also, teachers are not able to assess how well pupils are progressing through the curriculum. Leaders should continue with their work to develop a curriculum that clearly identifies the important knowledge that pupils should learn and how this will be assessed in each subject across all key stages.
- Some staff, including teachers who are responsible for leading a subject, are not sufficiently up to date in their subjects. This means that some teachers and teaching assistants do not have the knowledge they need to implement the curriculum as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that all staff receive the professional development they need to deliver the curriculum, across all subjects and key stages, as effectively as possible.
- Leaders have not yet established positive attitudes to learning for all pupils. As a result, some pupils do not engage well with their learning and produce work that does not reflect the standard of which they are capable. Leaders should build on their success of developing pupils' positive attitudes to coming into school, to ensure that they also have positive attitudes to their learning so that they can achieve as well as possible.

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](#)' 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	144633
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	10241491
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	9 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	46
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Neil MacMillan
Headteacher	Emily Hopkins-Hayes
Website	www.ventureacademy.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Venture Academy opened in September 2020 when the school joined the MacIntyre Academies Trust. Previously the school was open under a different name and part of another trust.
- Venture Academy is a special school catering for pupils with needs associated with autism spectrum disorder and/or social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All the pupils attending the school have an education, health and care plan.
- The school uses four alternative providers. These are: Dare2Dream Foundation, Flourish at the Farm, Leamington Lamps and Vineyard Learning Centre.
- 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.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into: reading, mathematics, physical education and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to staff about the curriculum in some other subjects and looked at samples of work.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the head of academy and a wide range of other staff. The lead inspector met with members of the local advisory board, the chief executive officer and a representative of the local authority.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record and a sample of safeguarding records. They spoke to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and some of the deputy DSLs. Inspectors also spoke to the pupils, parents and staff about safeguarding.
- Inspectors spent time observing lunchtimes.
- Inspectors considered responses from parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Jo Evans, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Chris Pollitt

His Majesty's Inspector

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