

Inspection of Venture Academy

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

Inspection dates:	11 and 12 March 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The principal of this school is James Bowater. This school is part of Macintyre Academies multi-academy 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), Emily Hopkins-Hayes, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Denise Cockrem.

What is it like to attend this school?

Venture Academy is a place where staff have an unconditional positive regard for pupils. Pupils appreciate how understanding staff are, which make them feel happy, safe and settled. They know that staff have their best interests at heart and that they go above and beyond to help. One pupil summed this up beautifully, describing teachers that 'know "about" us, not just "of" us'. This is a school that is built on positive relationships along with compassion, ambition and partnership.

Many pupils have experienced significant disruption at other settings, prior to joining. This school provides effective guidance and support to help pupils improve their behaviour and attendance and to develop positive attitudes to their education. Bullying is rare, but if it happens, pupils have absolute trust that staff will sort it out quickly.

The school is ambitious and has high expectations of what pupils can achieve. This shows, for instance, in the significant increase in recent GCSE examination entries. Pupils work hard, take pride in what they do and experience success. During their time here, pupils grow in confidence and resilience, which prepares them for their next stage in education, employment or training.

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

The school has constructed a curriculum that is tailored to meet the individual needs of pupils. It has identified content that is most pertinent and useful for pupils, for instance by recognising the importance of personal, social and health education (PSHE). This does not mean the curriculum is narrow. It is broad and ambitious. The curriculum provides an increasing range of qualifications for all pupils to work towards.

The school has ensured that staff have good subject knowledge and the resources to deliver effective, engaging lessons. Staff present information clearly, and when they spot misconceptions they address them effectively with additional explanation and discussion. There are, however, times when teachers do not check pupils' understanding during lessons effectively enough. This means that some activities they give pupils can be too easy or too difficult.

Before coming here, many pupils have had negative experiences of education and often lack confidence. Staff carefully determine pupils' learning gaps and social and emotional needs. They are expert at identifying whether pupils have additional needs. The school uses this information to create individualised routes through school that address learning gaps as well as pupils' social and emotional well-being. This bespoke approach is proving successful. For example, the school helps pupils at an early stage of reading to become fluent and confident readers.

Some pupils struggle with behaviour. Staff are skilled at supporting them if they become anxious or upset. However, the school lacks suitable spaces in which pupils can calm down, particularly in terms of their sensory needs. Some spaces are too noisy or too bright.

The extent to which the school supports pupils' personal development is exceptional. In PSHE they learn about equality, diversity, positive relationships and important concepts such as consent. Trips to places of worship give pupils an understanding of different faiths. There is significant emphasis on life skills, cultural enrichment and community involvement. A wide variety of visits and visitors enhance the curriculum well. Pupils get the chance to attend residential and take part in an extensive outdoor education curriculum. They participate in The King's Trust activities, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and benefit from enrichment days. A school council makes a tangible difference to school life. Pupils are most certainly active partners in their education. Considering the size of the school, the breadth of opportunities is simply vast.

The tireless work to prepare pupils for their next steps in education or training is impressive. The school provides independent, extensive and highly personalised careers advice and information. If a pupil here expresses an ambition, staff make every effort to help them achieve it. When they leave in Year 11, all pupils have somewhere to go that matches their dreams and aspirations.

The trust, along with leaders at all levels, has ensured staff are valued, supported and happy. There is a real sense of belonging and commitment and a ceaseless drive to help improve the lives of pupils and their families. Parents and pupils recognise and appreciate this. The school has been successful in improving and developing effective working relationships with other agencies and with parents. This has created a positive culture in which everyone is pulling in the same direction in the best interests of pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes teachers do not check effectively enough that pupils fully understand content during lessons. This means that teaching can move on too quickly or focus on content which pupils have already grasped. The school should support teachers to check accurately how well pupils understand their lessons and make adaptations to maximise learning.
- When pupils become anxious, especially when there is a sensory trigger, they do not always have access to a suitable space in which they can regain control of their emotions and actions. This means that the time it takes to become calm takes longer than it could. Though space is limited, the school should work to improve current breakout spaces so that sensory factors are considered and so provide pupils with suitable spaces in which to ready themselves for learning.

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	144633
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	10344136
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	50
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Denise Cockrem
CEO of the trust	Emily Hopkins-Hayes
Principal	James Bowater
Website	www.ventureacademy.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 September 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. The majority of pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs and/or have autism.
- The school uses three alternative provisions, two of which are unregistered.
- There has been a change of principal since the last inspection.

Information about this inspection

- 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 held meetings with the principal and other leaders.
- 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.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, physical education and PSHE. 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 listened to some pupils read.
- An inspector held a meeting with the chair of trustees and members of the local advisory board.
- The lead inspector spoke to a staff member at one of the alternative provisions, a health professional and an employment adviser who work with pupils from the school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, at different times of the day and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They spoke formally with groups of pupils, as well as talking to pupils in lessons and around school.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text responses. Inspectors also took account of responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including school improvement plans and the school website.

Inspection team

Gareth Morgan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Steph Withington

Ofsted Inspector

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