

Discovery Academy

Vernons Lane, Nuneaton, Warwickshire CV11 5SS

Inspection dates

3–4 July 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has created a good school that provides highly individualised support for those pupils who have previously found schooling difficult. He has benefited from the support of the trust, governors and staff.
- Teachers' strong subject knowledge is used well to ensure that learning activities are matched to pupils' interests and abilities.
- Pupils, staff, parents and carers all agree that the school is a safe place in which to be. All aspects of safeguarding arrangements are strong.
- The pastoral support provided for pupils and families through the 'compassionate schools' and 'family footings' teams is having a positive impact on pupils' engagement with learning and their emotional resilience.
- The curriculum provides a balance of academic and vocational learning, delivered through a broad range of subjects. Pupils are able to follow accredited courses suited to their needs.
- Parents speak highly of the school and the difference it is making to their children's lives.
- Pupils are being supported well to manage their behaviour in and around school. The number of incidents of inappropriate behaviour is reducing over time.
- Leaders are taking robust action to improve the attendance of pupils. From very low starting points, there is clear evidence that pupils' attendance is improving.
- Although the number of times that physical interventions are used is reducing, leaders recognise that it needs to reduce further.
- Leaders' school improvement planning is not sharply focused on measurable outcomes or their impact. Consequently, governors are not able to hold leaders to account with enough rigour.
- Recently appointed middle leaders are beginning to have an impact on the quality of teaching and learning. However, their work is at an early stage of development.
- Post-16 leaders have a clear vision for the provision. They recognise that students do not yet receive enough access to suitable work experience in the community.
- Leaders have recently reviewed their assessment system for checking pupils' progress. However, further refinement is necessary as information lacks clarity about expectations of pupils' progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the leadership, management and governance of the school by:
 - ensuring that school improvement actions are sharply focused on measurable outcomes, so that governors can hold leaders to account for their actions more effectively
 - further refining the school's assessment system so that expectations of progress and attainment are suitably challenging and are clearly articulated and understood by all.
- Further develop the work of middle leaders, including subject leaders, so that they:
 - have a good understanding of the progress that pupils are making across all year groups, and ensure that pupils receive additional support where necessary to improve their progress
 - have a clear overview of teaching and learning, enabling them to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning, and use this information to inform further support.
- Further develop the provision for students in the post-16 provision so that they have more opportunities to participate in external work experience, ensuring that they are better prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- Continue to reduce the number of physical interventions, ensuring that they are only used by staff as a last resort.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the school opened in September 2015, the headteacher has worked with focus and commitment, well supported by the trust, to ensure that staff have the necessary skills and expertise to continue the drive to establish a successful school.
- Senior leaders form a cohesive team. The headteacher's approach to sharing leadership responsibilities has enabled leaders to develop their skills and expertise. As a result, leaders make an effective contribution to improving the school. For example, information about all aspects of pupils' behaviour is analysed well and used to inform further support and interventions for pupils.
- There is a real sense of teamwork in the school. Staff made it clear, both through conversations and responses to Ofsted's staff survey, that they feel well supported by leaders. The headteacher has created a workplace where staff are trusted to take risks, for the benefit of the pupils. He has a strong regard for the well-being of both staff and pupils which results in a highly motivated group of staff.
- Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning through frequent lesson visits, learning walks and scrutiny of pupils' work. They know where the strengths and weaknesses are in relation to teaching and learning
- Newly appointed middle leaders are developing their roles well together. Fortnightly meetings enable them to share ideas and strategies that will enhance the support pupils receive. They have recently begun to take part in whole-school monitoring. Their work has had a positive impact on the application of the school's marking policy. However, they do not yet monitor the quality of teaching in their phase or subject. In addition, subject leaders do not have an overview of the progress all pupils are making in their respective subjects.
- The school's improvement plan is not sharply focused on outcomes. Consequently, governors are not able to check whether actions are having their desired impact on improving pupils' education. Senior leaders have not yet formally evaluated the effectiveness of the post-16 provision, which opened in September 2017.
- Leaders have developed a bespoke curriculum that is responsive to the needs of individual pupils and is tailored to their interests. The vocational and academic routes open to pupils in key stage 4 provide a clear pathway for pupils, preparing them for their next stages in education, employment or training.
- The curriculum planning ensures that British values thread through all aspects of learning. Activities are provided which support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. For example, pupils talked to the inspectors articulately about how they had learned about other religions, and about the importance of respecting the views of others and accepting people's differences.
- The small number of alternative provisions, used by the school to enhance pupils' learning opportunities, are checked thoroughly by leaders, and monitored regularly and systematically.

- The school's assessment system has recently been reviewed and refined by leaders. However, the system requires further work as information does not show clearly whether their definition of 'expected progress' is challenging enough to ensure that pupils' progress is accelerated.

Governance of the school

- The local advisory board, the school's governing body, has a good understanding of the school's work. Members were confident in talking about recent improvements in pupils' reading and spelling ages, for example because they make sure that they familiarise themselves with information they have been given.
- The chief executive officer of the trust has an active role in the work of the board. As a result, she too has a clear insight into the school's strengths and areas for development.
- Some members of the governing body are relatively new and are developing their roles. Governors are able to access governor training through the local authority to enhance their roles. A few governors have completed safer recruitment training and contribute effectively to the process of appointing suitable staff to the school.
- Governors are beginning to provide appropriate challenge to leaders and have planned a programme of meetings to quality assure the work of the school. Phase and subject leaders have begun to present their work to the governors so that they are informed about the work of the school.
- The chair of the governing body knows the school well. She liaises frequently with the headteacher to keep abreast of developments in the school. In her role as safeguarding governor, she meets the designated safeguarding leader (DSL) on a termly basis. The chair's recent safeguarding 'spot-check' visit highlighted gaps in a few members of staff's knowledge about procedures, and, as a result, additional training was put in place rapidly.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding, which is reinforced through robust systems and procedures to ensure that pupils are kept safe from harm. Staff are confident about whom they should report any concerns to, and posters around the school reinforce the message that safeguarding is a shared responsibility.
- The DSL arranges additional training for staff, and provides frequent updates on safeguarding matters. Records are kept securely, and concerns are followed up swiftly. The DSL attends the 'compassionate schools' and 'family footings' group meetings to ensure that any relevant safeguarding information informs the pastoral support pupils receive.
- The school promotes the importance of safeguarding to parents in a number of ways, such as through its Twitter feed, and at the 'safeguarding table' during parents' evening.

- The school has developed exemplary practice in the management of medication in school. The thorough checking and re-checking of all aspects of medication management, from consent to administration and storage, are evidence of strong safeguarding practice. The additional training that staff must complete before they are permitted to administer medication sets high expectations for all.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The strong relationships that exist between pupils and staff are evident throughout the school. Staff create learning environments where pupils receive effective support to help them re-engage with their learning.
- Staff get to know and understand pupils' needs well, enabling them to plan activities and the additional support pupils receive in lessons thoughtfully. Pupils' learning plans show that information about the way pupils prefer to learn is gathered sensitively and informs staff practice in lessons.
- Teachers take time to match work to pupils' interests. In key stage 2, for example, inspectors saw pupils engage in a writing task based on their personal interests, which included Pegasus the winged horse.
- Teachers' strong subject knowledge contributes to well-planned lessons for pupils. Staff with subject specialisms support other staff with their planning to ensure high expectations of learning activities. Pupils are developing appropriate subject-specific vocabulary. Work in mathematics books shows a broad coverage of different strands, with some opportunities to develop pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills. In English, pupils are developing their writing skills through a range of genres.
- Pupils' work in books shows that, on the whole, teachers are matching activities well to pupils' abilities, and pupils are making progress. Pupils take pride in their work, which is usually well presented. Pupils told inspectors that teachers' feedback was helping them improve their work. On some occasions, teachers do not make sure that pupils complete tasks set for them. This is more apparent for pupils in key stage 2.
- The high staff-to-pupil ratio in each class ensures that pupils are able to receive support when they need it. Teaching assistants usually provide effective academic and pastoral support for pupils in lessons. On a few occasions, staff are a little too quick to offer support and do not give pupils enough time to work out a problem for themselves.
- The additional support for literacy that pupils receive is making a positive difference to pupils' outcomes in reading and spelling. Leaders have ensured that reading has a high profile in the school, and as a result, previously reluctant readers are improving their reading skills. Inspectors heard several pupils read with confidence, both within lessons and in a small group.
- Literacy is being promoted well across the curriculum. Work in books in subjects other than English shows that basic grammar and literacy skills are being reinforced by teachers. In a physical education lesson, pupils were expected to write down the rules of the game they had played, further developing their writing skills.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are overwhelmingly positive about their experiences at Discovery Academy. The phrase, 'It's so much better than my last school,' is one that inspectors heard repeatedly during the inspection. Pupils are confident that they are safe at school and staff agree that pupils are safe.
- Pupils value the support they receive from the staff at school. They told inspectors that teachers are easy to talk to, and they listen to what they have to say. They say that they are well supported at school and acknowledge how they have changed. Pupils agreed when another told inspectors that, 'You wouldn't recognise what we were like in the past.'
- Parents are appreciative of the support they receive from the school for their child. The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's survey, Parent View, agreed that their child was happy, safe and well looked after at school. As a result, they say that their child is making good progress.
- The 'compassionate schools' and 'family footings' teams provide strong support to both pupils and families. Staff recognise that unless pupils' emotional needs are met, learning is unlikely to take place. Bespoke packages of support are developed for pupils and families, depending on their needs. Both teams provided compelling evidence of the positive impact of their work with pupils and families. Improvements are seen in areas such as engagement in lessons, behaviour, attendance and self-confidence. Parents appreciate the work of these teams and told inspectors how they had made a difference to their families and home life.
- The 'family footings' team has improved the annual review process for pupils to ensure that the resulting document and recommendations reflect pupils' needs more accurately. The local authority recently commended the school for its work and the team has been asked to share this good practice with other schools in the area.
- Pupils are able to refer themselves to the pastoral teams should they feel they need additional support. Staff have introduced additional lunchtime activities to enable pupils to develop their social skills within small groups.
- Staff provide a range of additional activities to enable pupils to develop their social, communication and empathy skills. Pupils spoke enthusiastically to inspectors about their recent work to support the Lord Mayor's nominated charity, and the 'Miles for Macmillan' walk.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including using mobile phones appropriately, staying safe online using filters and an awareness of age restrictions on games. They value the use of the 'pods' in school, as a quiet room they can take themselves to if they need to. They are aware of each other's differences. Typical comments from pupils included, 'autism is a really big spectrum and not everyone is the same'.
- The school council members value the opportunity to share ideas about how to

improve the school and say that they are listened to. They also accept that some of their suggestions are not taken forward, for justifiable reasons, such as using mobile phones in school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils move around the school building in an orderly way and show respect for staff and visitors.
- Pupils are supported well to manage their behaviour, and the school's analysis of incidents shows that they are reducing over time. Pupils' personalised learning plans identify triggers for pupils' behaviour and staff use this information to de-escalate behaviour incidents before they reach crisis point. If pupils need additional support, staff provide this in a discreet way so as not to disrupt the learning of other pupils. Pupils say that staff help them to learn how to manage their behaviour more effectively.
- Pupils value the 'dojo' points they receive for positive behaviour and can exchange them for a range of different rewards.
- Leaders set out clearly their graduated response to behaviour and aim to only use physical interventions as a last resort to keep pupils safe from harm. Information about incidents shows that although the number of physical interventions is falling, they are still too high for a small number of pupils. Leaders acknowledge that this is the case. As a result, they have begun working with behaviour analysts in order to gain a deeper insight into pupils' behaviour and ways in which pupils can be better supported to regulate their own behaviour.
- Leaders analyse their incident information frequently and are able to identify any patterns in incidents or types of behaviour. They noticed, for example, that more incidents were occurring at the beginning of the school day. They worked with the occupational therapist to plan sensory circuit activities every morning and as a result, incidents dropped significantly.
- Pupils say that while bullying does occur in school, it is dealt with quickly and effectively by staff. Incident reports show that there are some incidents of racist bullying but these are addressed quickly. Pupils say that they value having trusted adults to talk to in school.
- Attendance information shows that pupils' attendance is below the national average, and persistent absence is high. However, some pupils who have been admitted to the school recently have not accessed education for long periods of time. They are being supported with their transition into their new school for a short period of time on a part-time basis. This has had an adverse impact on attendance rates.
- Leaders not only analyse attendance information closely but put in place a variety of support for pupils to improve their attendance. Every pupil whose attendance is of concern has an individual attendance improvement plan and is allocated a key worker. Plans detail personalised strategies aimed at improving attendance. Most recent information shows that, from previous very low starting points, individual pupils' attendance is improving.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The additional support provided for pupils in reading and spelling has resulted in improved outcomes for most pupils, with gains of between one and three years in their reading and spelling ages in the last year.
- Progress information shows that pupils are making progress from their starting points. Work seen in books across a range of subjects shows that this is the case.
- The school's assessment information shows that disadvantaged pupils' progress is similar to, and in some cases, better than that of their non-disadvantaged peers.
- Because the school is relatively new, there is no information about results at the end of key stage 4. For the same reason, there is no information about pupils' destinations.
- Year 10 pupils have just completed the first year of GCSE courses in English, mathematics and science and are making good progress towards their target grades. Pupils are following several different accredited courses, such as functional skills and BTEC awards, and are on track to achieve a suitable range of accreditation by the end of Year 11.
- In 2017, outcomes for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 were variable. However, leaders provided convincing evidence to inspectors about the personal circumstances for this small group of pupils and the subsequent impact on their outcomes.
- A small number of pupils in Year 10 are benefiting from work experience opportunities, based on their needs and interests. Impartial careers advice and guidance for pupils, beginning in key stage 3, help pupils to make informed choices about their options and career paths. Currently, not all pupils in key stage 4 take part in work experience activities.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The two teachers who share the leadership of the newly created post-16 provision have developed a suitable vision for its further development. As a result of gathering the views of students, leaders have been able to provide a personalised curriculum based on students' needs, interests and abilities.
- A small number of students have taken GCSE examinations in English and mathematics this year. Students are following a range of accredited courses in subjects such as hospitality, health and social care, catering, and performing arts and have completed the first year of a two-year course. External verification of students' work shows that teachers' assessments of students' work are accurate.
- Leaders have high expectations of students' behaviour. There are very few incidents of poor behaviour. Students work cooperatively together and inspectors saw small groups of students working as teams to plan a business pitch to the headteacher.
- Students are being supported to develop their social and emotional resilience through activities such as business and enterprise projects, charity work and purposeful community visits. Students planned a visit to a nearby furniture store to purchase some

flat-pack furniture, then had to construct it on their return to school.

- There is a strong emphasis on developing students' vocational as well as academic skills. All students receive timely impartial careers advice and guidance. Links with external employers are at an early stage of development, and as a result, too few students are benefiting from work experience opportunities.

School details

Unique reference number	140654
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	10048320

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	9 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	84
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	10
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Kirsty Firth
Principal	Matthew Pike
Telephone number	02477 103370
Website	www.thediscoveryacademy.org
Email address	discovery.office@macintyreacademies.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Discovery Academy is one of three schools in the Macintyre Academies Trust. The school's governing body is known as the local advisory board and reports to the Macintyre Academies Trust Board.
- The school opened in September 2015 with 34 pupils.
- The school's post-16 provision opened in September 2017. The majority of students in Year 12 and Year 13 joined the provision on or after this date.
- The majority of pupils who attend the school are White British.

- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is more than double the national average.
- Almost all pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are well below national averages. A number of pupils have experienced gaps in their education before being placed at the school.
- In 2017, the school achieved the 'Families First Quality Award'.
- The school uses the following alternative provision for a very small number of pupils: Nuneaton and Bedworth Leisure Trust, Coventry Building Workshop and Positive Impact on Pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, and senior and middle leaders to discuss all aspects of the school's performance. The lead inspector spoke to the school's external consultant via telephone.
- Inspectors visited lessons in all key stages. Some visits were accompanied by the headteacher. Inspectors observed pupils' conduct during the day and at break- and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors listened to a small number of pupils read. Inspectors talked to school council members and chatted informally to pupils throughout the day.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of the trust and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentary evidence, including progress information, minutes of governing body meetings, behaviour reports, attendance information and pupils' learning plans.
- Inspectors met formally with a small group of staff and spoke to staff informally during the inspection. The 43 responses to Ofsted's staff survey were considered.
- The lead inspector met with the DSL and scrutinised a range of safeguarding documentation, including the school's single central record and child protection files.
- The lead inspector spoke to a representative from the alternative provision Positive Impact on Pupils by telephone.
- Inspectors spoke to one parent on the telephone and talked to a small number of parents at the beginning of the school day. Inspectors considered the 24 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and a small number of accompanying free-text comments. They considered seven responses to the online pupil survey.

Inspection team

Deb Jenkins, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Johanne Clifton

Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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