

Inspection of a good school: Calthorpe Academy

Darwin Street, Highgate, Birmingham, West Midlands B12 0TP

Inspection dates: 4 to 5 October 2023

Outcome

Calthorpe Academy continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Mounir Meghalsi. This school is part of Thrive Education Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Richard Chapman, and overseen by a board of directors, chaired by Julia Davey.

What is it like to attend this school?

Very special things are happening at Calthorpe Academy. This community is driven to make every moment count for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school is determined that those needs will not limit pupils' achievements or enjoyment of school and the world around them.

Pupils have a broad range of complex needs. From the moment pupils arrive, the school starts working with families and specialist services to understand pupils' needs so the right help can be put in place. Partnerships with health, social care and local authority teams provide a team around the pupil and their family to get the right support at the right time.

Calmness and care define the relationship between staff and pupils. The school acts swiftly when pupils need extra help or support. Therapies, interventions and carefully considered provisions overcome the reasons for challenging behaviour. Consequently, pupils' behaviour across the school is settled and purposeful.

Preparation for life in modern-day Birmingham is a priority. Not only do pupils have opportunities to visit places such as soft play centres and shops, but every trip is an opportunity to practise communication or independence skills. Consequently, pupils are proud of their school and their city.

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

The school is highly ambitious for how and what pupils will learn. Lessons in communication, reading, mathematics, personal, social, health education (PSHE) and

physical development prioritise the skills that pupils need to access the curriculum and the world around them. Some other subjects are not yet as well developed or planned, but the school has recognised this and is working hard to make changes quickly.

Pupils have a broad range of different SEND. This includes speech, language and communication needs, autism and sensory processing needs. From the moment the pupils arrive, staff work hard to understand those needs so the right provision can be put in place. Pony and music therapy and a range of other specialist interventions help overcome those potential learning barriers. Assisting pupils to find ways to communicate effectively is a strength at Calthorpe. Picture exchange, signing and symbols help pupils find their 'voice'.

The school's curriculum pathway model ensures that pupils work alongside pupils with similar needs and staff with specialised skills in meeting those needs. This includes a local secondary school provision for pupils who need a mainstream curriculum and environment with appropriate support. In most cases, skilled staff carefully adapt lessons to make learning more accessible. The school is currently enhancing staff training to ensure that all staff are highly skilled and knowledgeable in adapting lessons and making learning more accessible.

For pupils to be consistently challenged to get the best outcomes, sometimes pupils will move pathways to access more appropriately challenging learning. In these cases, staff work together to share knowledge about the individual needs of the pupils and how they can learn best. Hence, pupils get the help they need from the moment they start. However, in some cases, pupils do not have the knowledge and skills that their new classmates have already learned, so they are not as well prepared as they might be to access lessons in the new pathways. This slows their learning.

A commitment that every pupil will learn to read and develop a love of books is a non-negotiable for the school. Staff know that some pupils might not yet be ready for phonics, so they work hard on developing an awareness of sounds in the environment and shared attention. When pupils are ready, staff provide lessons to develop pupils' knowledge of phonics and understanding of what they have read. Pupils regularly read with an adult. They enjoy reading and taking books home. Consequently, many pupils move on to become fluent readers who love reading.

Lessons are calm and purposeful. It is rare for behaviour to negatively affect learning. When that happens, staff act swiftly to provide the right support at the right time. The schools' awareness of and response to sensory processing disorders is a strength. This means that they work hard from when the pupils arrive in the morning to provide sensory circuits or that supportive and calming 'good morning' to put pupils at ease and feel valued.

Pupils have frequent and exciting opportunities to learn the skills they need to prepare for the world around them. The school plans regular opportunities to take pupils into the community from the early years. As pupils get older, work-related learning and strong career advice promote awareness of choices for employment, training and further

education. Caring and supportive staff keep an eye on those leavers for two years after they have left to ensure they are still safe and enjoying their next destination.

Staff are positive about and appreciate the support for their well-being. They see that leaders care and go the extra mile to ensure the workload is never too much. They appreciate the mutual respect and care in this supportive culture. Staff think the school is well led and managed. Inspectors agree.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- When pupils move between curriculum pathways, they are not always well prepared for the challenges and expectations of the new curriculum. This slows their learning. The school should ensure that when the decision is made to transition pupils to a new curriculum pathway, the current pathway prioritises and implements the critical curriculum content that pupils will need to successfully engage in learning in the new pathway.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged school to be good in November 2017

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	141252
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10257038
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	428
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	113
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Julia Davey
CEO of the trust	Richard Chapman
Headteacher	Mounir Meghalsi
Website	www.calthorpe.thrive.ac
Date of previous inspection	28 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The current headteacher took up post in January 2020, having previously been a senior leader at the school.
- The deputy headteacher took up post in November 2022, having previously worked at the school for eight years
- Four assistant headteachers have also recently taken up posts in September 2019, January 2020, September 2021 and September 2023. Three of these senior leaders were previously employed at the school before taking up these roles
- There are currently two co-chairs of the local governing body. They both took up post on September 2023
- The school opened an additional provision for primary-age pupils with autism on Belgravia Road in January 2021, called Belgravia School.

Information about this inspection

- 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.
- 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.
- During the inspection, inspectors completed deep dives in the following subjects: reading, communication, mathematics, physical development and PSHE. In these subjects, they visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked with pupils and staff about how these subjects were taught. Inspectors also looked at other subjects in less detail to check how they were planned and taught.
- Inspectors observed informal times to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors visited the provisions at Belgravia School and Waverley School to evaluate the quality of provision for pupils who attend those sites.
- During the inspection, the inspectors had formal meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject teachers, the chair of governors and pupils. They also talked informally with parents, carers, pupils and staff to gather general information about school life.
- An inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- An inspector also spoke with representatives of the multi-academy trust.

Inspection team

Chris Pollitt, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Anna Vrahimi

His Majesty's Inspector

Chris Stevens

His Majesty's Inspector

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