

# Bishop Alexander L.E.A.D. Academy

Wolsey Road, Newark, Nottinghamshire NG24 2BQ

## Inspection dates

17–18 January 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- This is an improving school. The headteacher, supported by key staff, the academy trust and local governors, has successfully established a culture of high expectations of pupils and staff.
- The drive, passion and commitment of senior leaders and other staff results in a good quality of education, with most pupils doing well in a range of subjects.
- Leaders' and the trust's monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance are accurate. They are effective in bringing about improvements to the school.
- Teaching is effective. The work in most pupils' current and most recently completed books shows that they are making good progress.
- Teachers work well with teaching assistants to make sure that no pupils are left behind.
- The large majority of pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to their learning.
- Children in the early years get off to a good start in their education, both socially and academically. Boys and disadvantaged pupils are making rapid progress from their starting points because of the support they are given.
- Staff are well trained in safeguarding and report any concerns to senior leaders.
- The school environment is calm and purposeful. Pupils enjoy their lessons and get on well with one another. Pupils are safe in school.
- The large majority of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive a good level of support and make good progress from their starting points.
- Most pupils enjoy coming to school. However, the attendance of some groups, such as boys, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and Traveller pupils, is below average although it is improving.
- Pupils in key stage 1 do not always use their previously learned skills to spell accurately when they write longer pieces of work.
- There are gaps in some lower-attaining pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in mathematics in key stage 2 because they were not taught effectively in previous years.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the improved provision in mathematics to accelerate pupils' progress in key stage 2, particularly among lower-attaining pupils, by all teachers:
  - increasing pupils' confidence and accuracy in the mental recall of key number facts
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their problem-solving and reasoning skills
  - placing more emphasis on increasing pupils' ability to solve problems that have two or more steps accurately.
- Increase the accuracy of pupils' spelling in their written work, particularly in key stage 1, to raise achievement in writing.
- Improve attendance and reduce persistent absence further for groups such as boys, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities by:
  - increasing parents' understanding of the importance and educational benefits of daily school attendance
  - developing and consolidating links with the Traveller community.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The school has been through a period of significant change following conversion to an academy. A new headteacher, senior leaders and many teaching staff have been appointed to the school over the last three years.
- Since her appointment, the headteacher, supported by the other members of the leadership team, has provided just the right balance of challenge and support to ensure that pupils now make good progress.
- Staff morale is high and there is an all pervasive 'can do' culture inside the school. This is typified by a conversation between a teacher and pupil observed during a lesson. 'I don't think you can do this,' said the teacher, referring to a challenging piece of work. 'Yes I can,' replied the child indignantly, 'I can do anything!' Staff are proud to work in the school. More importantly, the overwhelming majority of staff think that the school is improving.
- Leaders and other teachers have developed a school culture that is both caring and ambitious. They want the very best for the children. This is grounded in a clearly expressed set of values that pupils know and understand.
- Leaders at all levels have an accurate understanding of the school's overall performance and the standards achieved by the pupils. This is because they have well-established processes for checking out what is happening in school. Where strengths are identified, they are celebrated. Where weaknesses are noted, decisive action is taken to remedy them. Arrangements for managing the performance of teachers and for staff training are effective.
- Leaders have identified the important areas for development and have suitable plans in place to deliver the improvements. Leaders make sure that teachers share their high expectations and effective practice. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the last inspection of the predecessor school.
- The focus on reading and writing since the previous inspection has paid dividends. Pupils' books show that the range and quality of writing have improved significantly. Leaders know, however, that some pupils' spelling, especially in key stage 1, is not yet precise enough.
- Leaders know that the teaching of mathematics in the past has not been effective and there are gaps in pupils' mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding, particularly for low-attaining pupils. Leaders have turned their full attention to tackling this issue. Training has been provided for teachers and teaching assistants and a range of time-focused interventions have been implemented to bring pupils up to the expected standard. These actions are beginning to have the desired impact and gaps are closing rapidly, but weaknesses in learning are still evident in some classes in key stage 2.
- The curriculum is both broad and balanced. A range of themes linked to other subjects, such as history, art and design technology, are enjoyed by pupils and there is a range of other activities and extra-curricular opportunities that support pupils' good progress.

- All staff work hard to ensure that all pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain. The school's curriculum covers this area effectively and is working well. The contribution this makes to pupils' understanding of tolerance, respect and differences is good.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is threaded through the curriculum and underpins the school's values. For instance, each pupil was given a chicken's egg to care for and protect for a day. This helped promote and develop responsibility, one of the school's six values. British values are also promoted effectively. Pupils are encouraged to contribute their own ideas, for example through the school council.
- The school's physical education (PE) and sport premium is spent well. The use of sports coaches has increased the take-up of extra-curricular sport by pupils, especially girls in key stage 2. Increasing numbers of pupils are participating in inter-school competitions. Funding is also used to provide professional development for teachers on a specific focus each term, developing staff confidence and understanding. This is leading to better progression of pupils' PE skills from year to year.
- The school uses the pupil premium funding effectively to diminish the difference between the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils at the school and other pupils nationally. Leaders successfully identify the barriers that disadvantaged pupils face. For example, leaders use some of the funding to provide a breakfast club. This ensures that those who attend come to school ready to learn, that their social, emotional and health needs are met, and that they are prepared for learning.
- Leaders are working hard to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence. A range of suitable strategies have been implemented. These are showing encouraging signs of improvement. Telephone calls, letters and home visits coupled with the targeted work with some families have raised the profile of attendance and the need to come to school daily. There is now a zero tolerance of term-time holidays. Although the attendance of some groups, such as boys, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved markedly, attendance rates are still too low. Leaders are determined to improve this further. The attendance officer has established links with the Traveller community to increase their engagement and encourage more regular attendance by several families.
- Funding to support special educational needs is used effectively to provide help and intervention for pupils who require additional support. As a result, the needs of these pupils are met and they do well across a range of subjects. The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well tracked.

## **Governance**

- The L.E.A.D. Academy Trust supports the school well.
- The trust holds school leaders to account. Representatives routinely assure the quality of the school's data and visit the school each month to evaluate whether sufficient progress is being made in the areas requiring improvement. They ensure that the school's leaders take decisive action where pupils' progress is not accelerating quickly enough.

- The trust provides a range of professional support and development for leaders and staff, which is valued and appreciated. This is leading to increased staff confidence. The trust undertakes the headteacher's performance management effectively and ensures that the performance of all other staff in the school is managed suitably.
- The trust ensures that the local governing body has the knowledge and expertise to fulfil its responsibilities well. The governing body takes its responsibility for safeguarding seriously and ensures that pupils are safe.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of promoting pupils' well-being and safety in the school. Staff are committed to supporting the pupils and their families. The appointment of a family support worker is helping to bridge the gap between home and school for some parents.
- All staff take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously and look carefully for any signs that support is needed. Every member of staff is trained and up to date with the latest guidance on keeping children safe in education.
- All of the checks to help keep children safe are carried out thoroughly. For example, the recruitment checks on staff's suitability to work with children are thorough. The site is safe and secure, and the pupils' survey confirms this. Staff are vigilant and the training they have received means that they are aware of the risks to the pupils in their care. They have recently undertaken training on a range of issues such as female genital mutilation and extremism.
- The school works effectively with outside agencies to safeguard pupils. For example, the procedures for dealing with pupils who are missing from school are robust.
- All those parents who spoke with inspectors or completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that their children are safe in school.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection as a result of well-targeted and effective training and support for teachers and teaching assistants. Much of the teaching in the school is now good.
- The majority of teachers use the information they have about pupils' knowledge and understanding to set work that meets their learning needs. Classrooms contain a good range of resources to support learning. Consequently, the large majority of pupils do well.
- Teachers and teaching assistants use a range of interventions to support those who are falling behind to catch up. For instance, during the inspection, a small-group lesson in English actively engaged pupils in a series of lively activities, helping them to increase their knowledge and understanding of similes.
- Relationships are strong in the school and the ethos within classrooms and other break-out spaces supports the pupils in making good progress. Low-level disruption is rare. Occasionally, a few pupils take a little time to settle to their tasks because they spend too much time writing the learning objective. This slows down their progress.

- Most staff are consistent in the application of the school's policy on marking and feedback. Occasionally, teachers do not provide pupils with the opportunity to complete the next steps they have identified. For instance, teachers identify spelling errors but do not provide the time for pupils to respond and correct them. Teachers' questioning of pupils is effective because staff take care to use precise language and pupils respond well.
- Phonics is taught well. Pupils' reading skills are well developed in the early years and key stage 1. Suitable challenge is provided for the most able. Those who find reading difficult are provided with additional phonics support to help them catch up. Standards in reading for boys have improved. Low-attaining and high-attaining pupils read texts accurately for their ability. The school has invested in a stock of 'boy-friendly' books. Pupils also engage well in activities such as computer quizzes, which are proving engaging and motivational.
- A large majority of pupils make good progress in writing. Work in books and displays around the school reflect pupils' enthusiasm to write. They are very engaged in the topics they write about. For instance, pupils wrote very persuasively and passionately to the headteacher following her decision to 'cancel' Christmas celebrations in school.
- Most pupils apply their phonics skills well in reading and writing. Some pupils in key stage 1 do not apply their phonics skills well enough, however. For instance, when writing, pupils do not spell commonly needed words with consistent accuracy.
- For some time, the teaching of mathematics has not been as effective as in other subjects. Because of this, there are gaps in pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding, particularly those of the lower-attaining pupils in key stage 2. For instance, some do not have swift recall of their tables and other number facts. Some pupils do not take sufficient care when working out their calculations and so make careless mistakes. Some pupils are able to solve one problem accurately, but find it difficult to use the information gathered to solve another problem. Teachers are providing more problem-solving activities but some pupils still find it difficult to explain how they have arrived at their answer.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and they are keen to learn. 'It's a good school if you want to learn and achieve something', said one pupil. 'I would definitely recommend this school to other people', said another. Pupils work well together and listen to each other's views carefully.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and the pupils' survey confirms this. One said, 'People here are nice and caring.' The curriculum supports the pupils in understanding the broad range of ways in which they need to keep themselves safe, such as with road and internet safety. Pupils told inspectors that there is always an adult they can go to if something is bothering or upsetting them.

- Only a small minority of parents who responded on Parent View believe that bullying is dealt with effectively. This suggests that others consider that it is not dealt with well. However, this is not the case – we found that other parents, pupils and staff believe bullying is dealt with effectively, and inspection evidence shows that staff take any allegation of bullying seriously and deal with the concern promptly.
- Pupils are polite and courteous. They readily take on responsibilities such as those of peer mentors, school councillors and monitors. Pupils are elected to the school council through a democratic process and their views are canvassed as part of the school's review process.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Staff set high standards for behaviour, to which the pupils respond very well. The school is a happy, welcoming and orderly environment. From an early age, pupils are taught well how to consider the feelings of others and the consequences of their actions.
- Most pupils have positive attitudes to their work and conduct themselves well in lessons. Almost all pupils take part fully in their learning. On the rare occasions when they do not sustain their concentration or they drift off task, staff act promptly and effectively to make sure they re-engage.
- Pupils' conduct and behaviour are good and reflect the school's ethos. Most pupils treat each other with respect and listen to what each other has to say in lessons and informally at breaktimes. They play well together in the playground and look after each other. Behaviour in the dining room is exemplary.
- Most pupils enjoy coming to school. However, a number of boys and disadvantaged pupils have not attended regularly enough in the past. Attendance is also adversely affected by the persistent absence of a significant minority of Traveller families and a few pupils with ongoing long-term medical needs. A concerted and determined effort has been made to help all parents understand the importance of attending school every day. A number of systems and structures have been robustly implemented which is leading to improvement in daily attendance and a reduction in persistent absence. The attendance officer is cultivating positive links with the Traveller community to help them understand the need for regular attendance. The family support worker is also working with other families to ensure that pupils get to school regularly and on time.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

**Good**

- Current pupils in school are making strong progress across the curriculum in almost all classes. From their different starting points, they are now developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Over the past two years, the proportion of pupils who have reached a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has been close to the national average.

- The school's results in the year 1 phonics screening check in 2016 was below the national average but, because of current good teaching, pupils are now using phonics well to read and write. By the end of Year 2 in 2016, almost all pupils attained the required phonics standard and there was no difference between the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school.
- In 2016, pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 was in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics for those working at and beyond the national standard. Given the below-average starting points for many pupils, this represents good progress.
- By the end of key stage 2, pupils have not reached high enough standards for some time. In 2016, their attainment in reading and writing was broadly in line with national averages, but was below average in mathematics. The school's data and monitoring information, along with a scrutiny of books and work, show that pupils are now making good progress and standards are rising. A greater number are working at the standard expected for their age.
- The most-able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are targeted through additional support by senior leaders. Regular meetings about pupils' progress are used to check how well these pupils are doing and show that individual pupils are making faster progress.
- The progress in reading of the most-able and least-able pupils is improving. The school's organisation of the teaching of reading is supporting good progress because most pupils have adult support during guided reading sessions.
- In 2016, pupils' progress in writing at the end of key stage 2 was significantly above average and in the highest 10% nationally. Pupils believe themselves to be writers and develop good writing stamina from an early age because they are provided with opportunities to write at length. They use imaginative vocabulary to interest the reader. In key stage 1, however, some boys and girls do not use their phonics skills well enough to spell common words accurately. This mars their work.
- Plentiful opportunities are provided for pupils to write in other subjects. For instance, pupils in Year 6 evaluated pieces of artwork and wrote detailed notes about famous inventors such as George Stephenson. In science, for example, suitable opportunities are also used to develop skills in mathematics by completing graphs and tables.
- The relentless whole-school focus on improving mathematics is accelerating pupils' progress. A number of lower-attaining pupils in key stage 2 have gaps in their mathematical knowledge and understanding due to the variability of past teaching. These pupils are being provided with additional targeted support, which is helping them catch up and increase their confidence.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged are making good progress because of well-targeted additional assistance in lessons to back up the good teaching. The teacher with responsibility for special educational needs uses the additional funding well to accelerate pupils' progress.



## Early years provision

**Good**

- The provision is led and managed well by the early years leader, who has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development. Planned actions are carefully checked to see whether they have the desired impact on children's achievement. The early years leader checks the quality of teaching and provides continued training and support to improve practice. For example, staff have been filmed interacting with children, developing their speaking and listening. The resulting video was then shared and discussed with the team, and outcomes used to improve practice.
- Children enter the early years with skills lower than those typical for their age, particularly in speaking and listening. Good support is provided for disadvantaged children. Consequently, they make good progress towards catching up with the skills and abilities that are typical. By the time they leave the Reception class, the proportion of children who attain a good level of development is close to the national average. This enables them to be ready to start Year 1.
- Children settle quickly and engage positively in the tasks provided for them. They talk confidently about what they are doing. For example, during this inspection, children were busy outdoors building a rocket using a variety of materials and at the same time developing problem-solving, creativity and language skills.
- There is a happy atmosphere in lessons and children's behaviour is positive. There is a buzz of activity and industry. Staff have high expectations of manners and courtesy which they model for the children and, as a result, children learn and play together well.
- The children are encouraged to be independent and to do things for themselves. They get the resources out and put them away themselves.
- Most-able children, including those who are disadvantaged, are suitably challenged by all adults. Boys' achievements have typically been below those of the girls. The early years team has considered how boys learn best and implemented a range of strategies to bring this better learning about. Current data and information show that boys' progress in reading and writing in the Reception class is now outstripping that of girls.
- The children's reading and writing skills develop well through a learning environment that is rich in language and literacy. For example, children enjoyed exploring the playground to find and record the names of aliens located in different places.
- Safeguarding is effective in the early years and welfare requirements are all met. Staff are well trained and understand how to keep children safe. Children show they feel safe through their attitudes and behaviour and are confident enough to speak to visitors.
- Parents have regular information about their child's progress. They are becoming even more involved in their child's learning and the early years leader has rightly identified that this is an area to improve further. Parents are now inputting information into the e-journals and staff share next steps online with parents.

## School details

Unique reference number	140544
Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	10023075

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	335
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Chris Richards
Headteacher	Nicola Spencelayh
Telephone number	01636 680 040
Website	<a href="http://www.bishopalexander.notts.sch.uk">www.bishopalexander.notts.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head@bishopalexander.notts.sch.uk">head@bishopalexander.notts.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school meets the requirements on the publication of specified information on its website. It complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- This is larger than the averaged-sized primary school. Pupils are taught in single or mixed-age classes.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are below average, but increasing.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.

- The school met the government's floor standards in 2015, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- The school runs its own breakfast club, which is managed by the governing body.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 22 lessons and attended a whole school assembly. Ten observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made several short visits to observe learning and small-group activities at other times.
- The inspectors held meetings with members of the local governing body and a representative of the L.E.A.D. Academy Trust. They also met with school staff, including phase, middle and subject leaders.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at its documentation, including teachers' planning, the school's analysis of its strengths and weaknesses, information on pupils' attainment and progress, records of behaviour and safety, the monitoring of teaching and the management of teachers' performance, local governing body evaluations, monitoring and evaluation summaries by the L.E.A.D. Academy Trust, and safeguarding documents.
- Discussions were held with groups of pupils, as well as informal conversations with them during lessons and at breaktimes. The inspectors listened to pupils read and talked to them about books they enjoy.
- The inspectors took account of 15 responses to Parent View and spoke with parents informally at the start of the school day. Responses to questionnaires completed by 49 pupils and 26 staff were also considered.

## Inspection team

Paul Weston, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Kim Bower	Ofsted Inspector
Dorothy Stenson	Ofsted Inspector

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