

Inspection of City Academy Whitehawk

Whitehawk Road, Whitehawk, Brighton, East Sussex BN2 5FL

Inspection dates: 8 to 9 May 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Thomas McMorris. This school is part of Aurora Academies 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), James Freeston, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Martha Burnige.

What is it like to attend this school?

All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), feel valued and cared for. The school treats all of its pupils as unique. Pupils feel a sense of care and value consistently from all staff. The majority of the school's pupils are disadvantaged in some way. The school ensures this is a motivation, not an excuse. Pupils thrive in a culture of high expectations, strive to rise to them and generally learn well. Pupils' current achievement in mathematics is stronger than the low 2023 key stage 2 national test results.

Pupils behave with respect and kindness. The school has exceptionally high expectations for conduct. Pupils share these expectations of themselves. This is evident in their impeccable classroom behaviour and joyful atmosphere among pupils of all ages at breaktimes. Pupils told inspectors about the school's expectations and explained, 'they make us feel like we are welcome,' and 'they check attendance every day, and there has to be a reason'.

Pupils feel safe because of the school's robust work. The 'Keeping Myself Safe' units are part of the school's routine personal development curriculum and help pupils feel secure in their community. Pupils are quick to identify their trusted adults and understand how to get help and be heard. As a result, the focus on mental and physical health is evident in pupils' language, attitudes and actions across the school.

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

Children get off to an exceptional start in the Nursery and Reception. The school's carefully sequenced and rigorous curriculum is highly effective. Staff prepare children for the next stages of education, instilling the necessary language and communication skills through enriching activities and opportunities. Children build meaningful relationships with each other and the well-trained staff who skilfully facilitate highly purposeful learning.

The school's ambition for its pupils is reflected in the curriculum design. Staff have carefully defined, rigorous and carefully ordered knowledge. The school has created the curriculum methodically to raise pupils' aspirations and broaden their horizons. For example, it develops pupils' learning in religious education to build greater community understanding and fosters a sense of tolerance and respect.

The support for pupils with SEND is of the highest standard. Staff's adaptations and understanding of pupils' needs are thorough and responsive. Pupils across the school develop their knowledge in different subjects and make meaningful links between topics. Staff usually check pupils' understanding carefully, and effective adaptations are made to close gaps in knowledge. Pupils typically demonstrate their understanding in books and discussions about their learning. The school has worked to address low 2023 key stage 2 mathematics results. Staff have benefited from high-quality training which is impacting positively on current pupils' achievement.

The reading curriculum is both systematic and inspirational. The school uses a rigorously planned approach to reading that starts from pupils' first days in school. Staff teach the planned content with consistency and fidelity. As a result, pupils develop into accurate and fluent readers. Pupils are enthusiastic readers. They are proud of the new library, and exciting, positive events like the weekly 'Reading Raffle' support their love of reading. Consequently, all pupils are avid readers at school and home.

The school has unapologetically high expectations for behaviour. Pupils exceed these aspirations and demonstrate appreciation and respect for staff. Staff have stringent but warm expectations. This is reflected in how closely all staff members know each pupil. Pupils feel safe, and playtimes are joyous. They have positive attitudes to learning rooted in understanding how much the school cares for them. The school has a robust and meticulous approach to challenging attendance issues. This approach is having a tangible improvement with all pupils, and especially those who are disadvantaged.

The school's personal development provision is exemplary. The school has precisely tailored the personal development offer to reflect the school's context. The school sees its offer as a way of raising pupils' aspirations and helping them to understand the world beyond the local area. This is evident in the school's values, which provide pathways for future success. The careers fairs, inspirational role models and various extra-curricular trips support deliberately chosen learning opportunities. As a result, pupils develop a deep sense of equality and maturity and see themselves as 'agents of change' in their community.

Leaders at all levels share a drive and passion for the school's mission. The school's unrelenting pursuit of the best educational offer for pupils is balanced with a focus on staff welfare and well-being. The school staff are well cared for, and there is a close sense of community and purpose among staff, trustees, and governors. The school works exceptionally well with other stakeholders, including parents, to continue to improve the quality of education provided.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The impact of the curriculum is not yet fully evident in mathematics. This means that pupils do not achieve as well as they could by the end of key stage 2. The school must ensure that staff continue to follow the planned curriculum, carefully check what pupils remember over time and address gaps swiftly.

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	139677
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10321977
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	386
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Martha Burnige
CEO of the trust	James Freeston
Headteacher	Thomas McMorris
Website	www.caw.brighton-hove.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 and 15 November 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is part of the Aurora Academies Trust. It joined the trust in 2017.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspectors met with the headteacher, trustees, the chief executive and the governors.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, history and art and design. 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. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- 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.
- The views of parents and carers were considered through their responses to Ofsted Parent View and on-site activity. Further views of pupils and staff were gathered through Ofsted's online surveys, interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documents, including self-evaluation reports, governing body and trustee meeting minutes, attendance records and behaviour incident logs.

Inspection team

Toby Martlew, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Catherine Cottingham	Ofsted Inspector
Lorraine Clarke	Ofsted Inspector

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