

Inspection of Bolder Academy

1 Macfarlane Lane, Isleworth TW7 5DB

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 December 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have placed pupils' character development at the heart of all that takes place at the school. Staff encourage pupils to live out the school's motto, 'Be kind, be strong, be brave', both in their learning and their conduct.

The curriculum is carefully planned. It allows all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to develop a secure understanding of the subjects that they study. Pupils experience purposeful lessons, which are calm and orderly.

Pupils take part in many different extra-curricular and leadership activities. Teachers plan and monitor the activities to ensure that all pupils take advantage of the opportunities on offer. Leaders recognise the value in pupils taking part in volunteering. They ensure that all do some form of this before they finish Year 9. Leaders have fully immersed pupils in the 'Be Bold' ethos of the school. Pupils demonstrate this through their engagement in school life and with the wider community.

Leaders have introduced new rules and routines that are promoting positive behaviour around the school site and in lessons. Leaders ensure that any bullying is rare. If it does occur, it is swiftly dealt with. Pupils are kept safe. Outside of lessons, pupils take advantage of the resources offered by their school, for instance they enjoy making use of the climbing wall.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum. They are experts in their curriculum subjects. Leaders use their expertise to plan and tweak learning effectively. They make sure that pupils have the strong foundations that they need for future study in a subject. Knowledge is introduced and recapped in a logical manner. In science, for example, leaders consider carefully how to build on what pupils have learned before Year 7. They link new ideas, for instance about cells, to what pupils have previously learned about the organs of the human body. In Year 9, pupils develop their understanding further, for example, by learning about prokaryotic and eukaryotic cells. This step-by-step approach means that pupils develop a sound understanding of key concepts in a subject.

Assessment is used well to help reinforce pupils' understanding of key concepts. Teachers also identify and fill any gaps in pupils' knowledge. Subject leaders keep a close eye on how well pupils are learning and remembering the curriculum. They use what they find out to decide how the curriculum should be adapted for pupils in the future.

Typically, pupils remember what they have been taught. This is because revisiting key ideas is prioritised in the delivery of the curriculum. Nevertheless, there are

some inconsistencies in how well this approach is working in some subjects. Sometimes, teachers set work that is not sufficiently focused on supporting pupils to understand and remember subject content in the long term.

Leaders and teachers identify and support pupils with SEND well, using approaches tailored to individual needs. They plan learning and make adaptations to ensure that pupils with SEND learn the same curriculum as their peers.

Reading is a focus at the school. Teachers ensure that pupils practise the correct pronunciation of subject-specific vocabulary. They model reading in lessons to support pupils' reading development. Pupils at the earliest stages of learning to read receive well-targeted extra help, including specialist support to develop their phonics knowledge.

Leaders have high expectations of the behaviour of pupils. They share these with staff and pupils. The new behaviour policy is working well in practice, particularly during lessons. Leaders are making sure that their new expectations are embedded consistently outside of classrooms.

The provision for personal development is at the core of all that happens at Bolder Academy. The personal, social and health education programme is valued by pupils. They confidently recall what they been taught, for instance, about what makes a healthy relationship. Careers guidance is interwoven throughout the curriculum and supported by tutor time and drop-down days. Leaders have made links with local employers. Through this, pupils have opportunities to complete work experience and external speakers visit the school to talk about the world of work.

Pupils have access to a large range of enrichment activities. Leaders have designed the programme to ensure that all pupils experience an appropriately rich choice of opportunities.

Leaders value high-quality professional development. They support staff workload and well-being. The governing body is at the heart of the school. It adopts a supportive approach, but also offers leaders helpful challenge about what could be even better.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that there is a strong culture of safeguarding. They have put in place a large and appropriately trained safeguarding team, which focuses sharply on promoting and securing pupils' well-being.

Leaders know the issues facing young people in the local area. When leaders are concerned that pupils may be at risk of harm, they make appropriate referrals and ensure that these are followed up on by the relevant authority. Leaders make sure that robust processes are followed for managing the safer recruitment of staff.

Staff receive appropriate training each year and know how to correctly make referrals. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some instances, pupils complete activities that are not closely linked to the aims and ambition of the curriculum. When this happens, it affects how well pupils are able to secure their understanding of key concepts in the long term. Leaders should continue their work to strengthen the delivery of the curriculum, so that pupils develop secure and detailed knowledge of the subject content identified in curriculum thinking.

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](#)' 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.

School details

Unique reference number	145866
Local authority	Hounslow
Inspection number	10255288
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	854
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Andrew Dodge
Headteacher	Heidi Swidenbank
Website	www.bolderacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school moved from its previous temporary premises into a new building on a new site in June 2021.
- The school currently caters for pupils in Years 7 to 11. Leaders intend to open the sixth-form provision in September 2023.
- Leaders make use of six registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- This is the first routine inspection 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leaders. They also met with the chair and other members of the governing body.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: computer science, history, mathematics, physical education and science. Inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work, met with pupils to discuss their learning, and met with subject leaders and teachers.
- Inspectors also visited lessons and reviewed pupils' work for some other subjects.
- Through discussions with leaders, governors, pupils and staff, inspectors considered how effectively pupils are safeguarded. Inspectors also looked at records related to safeguarding, including records of checks carried out before staff are appointed.
- Inspectors met with pupils to discuss aspects of safeguarding. They spoke to pupils during lesson visits. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at break and lunchtimes. The inspection team spoke to staff about behaviour and about their workload in the school.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's surveys for parent and carers, pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Luke Stubbles, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Mark Smith	His Majesty's Inspector
Olly Wimborne	His Majesty's Inspector
Gary Phillips	His Majesty's Inspector

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