

# Inspection of Powers Hall Academy

Spa Road, Witham, Essex CM8 1NA

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Inspection dates: 13 and 14 December 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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|---------------------------|----------------------|
| The quality of education  | <b>Good</b>          |
| Behaviour and attitudes   | <b>Good</b>          |
| Personal development      | <b>Good</b>          |
| Leadership and management | <b>Good</b>          |
| Previous inspection grade | Requires improvement |

The headteachers of this school are Daniel Sheehan and Maxine Harrington. This school is part of the Inspires Multi-Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Ceri Jones, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Barry Collyer.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils rise to the school's high expectations: 'be respectful, be responsible, be safe, be ready to learn'. At Powers Hall, everyone looks after each other. Consequently, pupils feel safe and happy. Pupils feel proud of their school. They are confident about talking to an adult if they have any worries. The daily 'Meet and Eat' sessions are extremely popular and help pupils feel settled and ready to learn.

Pupils learn the routines of good conduct. Around the school and in lessons, pupils are attentive and well behaved. Pupils are kind and helpful. They are respectful to adults.

Pupils happily take part in class discussions and have a clear understanding of how to improve their learning. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well alongside their peers. Pupils enjoy reading and they can present ideas for the books they would like teachers to read to them.

Pupils eagerly take on leadership roles, such as Playground Pals or school councillors. Pupils also enjoy and benefit from a range of clubs, particularly in sports. Carefully thought-out trips and other memorable experiences enrich the curriculum. They deepen pupils' learning and contribute well to their wider development.

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

Leaders and trustees have made significant improvements to the curriculum, pupils' behaviour and attitudes and their personal development since the previous inspection.

The school's strong focus on the quality of education ensures that pupils learn a stimulating and ambitious curriculum. The curriculum is carefully constructed. It grows more complex as pupils move through the school. For example, older pupils independently find out about the American civil rights movement because they have learned how to conduct historical research. The school ensures that pupils have solid foundations on which to build new learning.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They present learning clearly, which helps pupils to achieve well. Teachers quickly identify if a pupil has misunderstood something so they can correct this. Adults check that pupils remember what they are taught. Teachers design activities to help pupils to recall and apply their knowledge.

The school ensures that pupils with SEND are identified quickly. This means that teachers can swiftly make adaptations to learning. The school collaborates well with external agencies to secure additional support when needed. As a result, pupils with SEND access the full curriculum and achieve well.

The reading curriculum has been carefully structured. Adults teach the school's phonics programme well. Those pupils at an early stage of reading, or who find reading difficult, have effective extra support to ensure that they catch up with their peers. Pupils learn to read fluently and with confidence. As pupils become capable readers, they can select from a wide range of books they enjoy. Adults regularly read to pupils. This provides opportunities for pupils to experience new books they may not otherwise discover.

Pupils attend school regularly and behave well. When some pupils need additional help with their behaviour, they receive clear guidance from adults. The school provides well-tailored support for pupils' social and emotional needs. This provision is highly valued because it helps create a calm and purposeful environment for learning.

Pupils benefit from the well-considered personal development programme. Pupils understand the importance of respecting individual differences, equality and diversity. As a result, whatever a person's background or beliefs, pupils treat everyone fairly.

The trust maintains a clear and strategic oversight of the school. The trust holds leaders accountable for the school's provision. It balances this with appropriate support.

Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of what the school does well. They also know where it needs to improve. However, some subject leaders are not as knowledgeable about the requirements of their roles as others. They are still learning how to keep their areas of the curriculum under review.

Most staff value the support provided by senior leaders. In particular, they appreciate how senior leaders help them manage their workload.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- While subject leaders often know their curriculum areas well, a few subject leaders do not have the full depth of understanding they need to carry out their roles effectively. They do not always evaluate how well the curriculum is working in their subject. As a result, they do not always provide the high-quality support that teachers need to implement the curriculum as leaders intend. The school should ensure that all subject leaders receive the support and training they need to carry out their roles effectively.

## 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

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|--|---|
| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 139871  |
| <b>Local authority</b>                     | Essex   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                   | 10288525  |
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Junior  |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Academy converter   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 7 to 11   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed   |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 277   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | Board of trustees   |
| <b>Chair of trust</b>                      | Barry Collyer   |
| <b>CEO of trust</b>                        | Ceri Jones  |
| <b>Headteachers</b>                        | Daniel Sheehan and Maxine Harrington<br>(Co-headteachers)           |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.powershall.co.uk">www.powershall.co.uk</a>      |
| <b>Dates of previous inspection</b>        | 3 and 4 December 2019, under section 5<br>of the Education Act 2005 |

## Information about this school

- The school has appointed two new co-headteachers since the previous inspection.
- The school is part of the Inspires Multi-Academy Trust.
- At the time of the inspection, there were no pupils attending alternative education 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 the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history and music. 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. The lead inspector listened to some pupils read to an adult they knew.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The inspection team held meetings with the co-headteachers, senior leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with members of the trust, including the chair of trustees. He also met with the chief executive officer of the trust.
- 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 inspection team took account of a range of other information, including the school's development plans, school policies and trust minutes.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at other times around school. They met with groups of pupils to discuss behaviour in the school.
- Inspectors took account of parent, carer, staff and pupils' views through conversations and responses to Ofsted's surveys.

### **Inspection team**

|                             |                  |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Nick Rudman, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Susan Sutton                | Ofsted Inspector |
| Nicola Shadbolt             | Ofsted Inspector |

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