

Inspection of Drapers' Academy

Settle Road, Harold Hill, Romford, Essex RM3 9XR

Inspection dates: 4–5 March 2020

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is growing in popularity. The number of pupils on roll is increasing, including in the sixth form. Leaders expect all pupils to do well, regardless of their starting points.

Pupils are polite, respectful and accepting of others. They are courteous to their peers and towards adults, including visitors. Most pupils behave well in lessons and as they move around the school. They told us they feel safe and know where to go if there are issues or concerns.

Pupils told us that bullying does happen sometimes but said that leaders deal with any incidents effectively. Leaders explained that they always look to understand the root cause of all issues before taking appropriate action.

Staff provide many opportunities to strengthen pupils' personal development. This includes choirs, debating groups, sports clubs and drama activities. Trust sponsors contribute to enhancing pupils' life experiences. For example, all pupils have the opportunity for instrumental music lessons at no financial cost. Pupils take part in regular visits to Drapers' Hall, including for lectures and concerts. Queen Mary University of London provides support and guidance in preparation for pupils' next stages of education and the world of work.

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

Although GCSE results have not been strong over the past three years, evidence from subject planning, learning in lessons and pupils' work shows that the school is improving rapidly. Leaders in most subject areas have mapped the knowledge and skills that they want pupils to acquire over time. The curriculum is planned and sequenced to enable pupils to know more and to build on their learning over time. For example, in history pupils revisit concepts such as monarchy and feudalism at different points between Year 7 and Year 13.

In English, there is an explicit focus on developing and reinforcing key skills throughout key stage 3. As a result, pupils' written work shows increasingly sophisticated use of sentence structures. Leaders prioritise reading. The library has been refurbished. It has been restocked with well-chosen texts that pupils want to read, and which enhance their life experiences. Pupils are developing a love of reading and improving their skills. This supports their learning in all subjects.

In mathematics, teachers routinely check pupils' prior learning before they tackle more-complex tasks. Through focused questioning, misconceptions are identified and addressed quickly. We saw how well pupils demonstrate secure understanding as they solved problems.

Improvements have not been as rapid in science. Because of staffing problems, some pupils have gaps in their scientific knowledge. Additionally, the organisation of

the science curriculum has hampered some pupils' learning. The least able pupils are not given time to master important key stage 3 knowledge before moving on to more complex GCSE topics, which in science are started in Year 9. In modern foreign languages (MFL), leaders have reviewed the low take-up of French and German at GCSE. Some pupils currently study both languages during key stage 3. As a result, they are not prepared well enough for further study of the subjects. Changes are being made to both science and MFL to support future learning.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged follow the same curriculum as their peers. Teachers plan learning experiences that support them to succeed.

Pupils who receive some of their education in the Oak Centre do well. They follow study programmes that help them to overcome challenges which they face and re-engage them in learning. They take courses that provide clear routes to further study or training.

The sixth form offers a wide range of academic courses. Students enjoy their experiences and have very positive attitudes. Teachers challenge them to develop their skills and knowledge, so they can achieve well. They get good advice and guidance about their next steps. They also benefit from coaching and mentoring programmes. Consequently, many students continue their studies at university. A significant number are the first in their families to do so.

Leaders monitor pupils' attendance, including those who receive some of their education off-site. Leaders challenge poor attendance and provide good support to families. Although there has been an improvement to pupils' attendance, there is still more work to do. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is too high. This inevitably affects some pupils' progress.

Assemblies and workshops help pupils to learn how to keep physically, emotionally and mentally safe. The personal, social, health and economic programme covers a wide range of topics. It addresses these in an age-appropriate way so that pupils can be well-informed.

Trustees and governors know the school well. They ask probing questions of school leaders. The principal leads with integrity. Staff feel valued and well supported by leaders. They say they are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding team are knowledgeable. They provide support and guidance for pupils and staff on any issues that arise. All staff receive regular training to ensure that they can identify concerns. They also know how to act upon them. Leaders make sure that record-keeping is detailed and robust. They follow up all referrals effectively.

Pupils are made aware of local safeguarding risks. Through lessons, assemblies and workshops they learn how to keep safe. For example, Year 10 pupils told us about recent sessions regarding knife crime and how these had made them think deeply. This was because they learned about the real-life experiences of people who had been affected by it.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Rapid improvements have been made in many areas of the curriculum. However, this has not been the case in science and MFL. In key stage 3 science, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge. In French and in German, uptake at GCSE is too low. Leaders are revising subject planning in science and MFL. These should be implemented effectively so that pupils can secure the knowledge and skills needed for them to succeed in these subjects.
- Leaders monitor pupils' attendance rigorously. They offer challenge and support to pupils and their families to encourage improvements. Despite this, attendance rates remain lower than they should be, and the level of persistent absence remains high. Leaders need to maintain their focus on attendance and secure further improvements.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	136090
Local authority	Havering
Inspection number	10121519
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,147
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	152
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Morag Shiach
Principal	Darren Luckhurst
Website	www.drapersacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	25 September 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Drapers' Multi-Academy Trust (MAT).
- There are two sponsors of the trust, The Drapers' Company and Queen Mary University of London.
- The number of pupils on roll at the school has increased since the last inspection.
- The school uses alternative provision at: Olive AP Academy – Thurrock, BEP Academy, Koru, Barking and Dagenham College, Goldtrowel, TLC live, Lambourne End Centre for Outdoor Learning, and Future Gateways.
- A small number of pupils receive some of their education at the Oak Centre, a specialist resource base located within the school's site.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We held meetings with the principal, members of the senior leadership team, the head of sixth form and the special educational needs coordinator.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, languages, history, design and technology, and physical education. This involved meeting with leaders, teachers and pupils. We visited lessons in these subjects and looked at pupils' work.
- We spoke formally and informally with pupils, sixth-form students and members of staff. We also considered the views of staff, pupils and parents through Ofsted's inspection surveys.
- We met with the chair of the trust, a board member and members of the local governing body, including the chair and vice-chair.
- We also met with the chief executive officer of the MAT.
- The school's policies relating to safeguarding were scrutinised. We spoke with the designated safeguarding lead. Records of pre-employment suitability checks were also reviewed. To check the culture of safeguarding, we spoke with pupils and staff.
- We took into consideration additional correspondence received during the inspection.

Inspection team

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Hayley Follett	Ofsted Inspector
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