

Inspection of Aston University Engineering Academy

1 Lister Street, Birmingham, West Midlands B7 4AG

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 January 2022

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Students in this school enjoy a strong practical, technical and academic education. An exceptional enrichment programme also develops excellent employability skills. As a result, students are very well prepared for the world of work and to be citizens of modern Britain.

Expectations of all are high in the school. Students rise to these high expectations in their studies and their conduct. They have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to succeed. Many take on positions of responsibility and develop leadership skills in the school.

Students are mature and well behaved. Disruption to learning is rare, as are other issues such as bullying. Students know that staff will not tolerate inappropriate behaviour. They have faith in staff to tackle any that does happen. Consequently, students feel safe in school. They appreciate the care that staff show them. Students and their parents are glad they joined the school. Students enjoy their education, and almost all attend regularly.

The school has strong links with employers and Aston University. Students receive high-quality careers guidance from the moment they join the school. Many students go on to university when they leave. Others move on to high-quality apprenticeships and further study.

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

The school is well led. The principal, senior leaders and governors share a compelling vision to provide high-quality academic and technical education. This vision is being realised. The school's staff are committed to the school's mission. They form a united and hard-working team. They appreciate the leadership and support that senior leaders provide. Morale is strong.

The school's curriculum focuses on specialist subjects and developing key employability skills. The curriculum comprises traditional academic subjects, vocational areas and enrichment. Leaders have woven these elements together skilfully. Students have positive attitudes to the curriculum, and are prepared well for life beyond school.

Leaders plan learning well in most subjects. Students' knowledge builds logically from Year 9 to Year 13. Engineering is a strength of the school. Its teaching emphasises practical and technical skills from the start of Year 9. This means that students are well prepared to study engineering in the sixth form and beyond. The school's many links with industry and local employers enrich the curriculum. For example, students build a working aeroplane in partnership with the Air League and the Royal Air Force.

The curriculum in science is less well planned than in other subjects. At times, topics are not taught in a logical order. Students sometimes encounter new learning without having been taught necessary concepts beforehand.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They explain new concepts clearly. Many teachers use assessment well. They know whether students have understood important concepts. They revisit learning when students have not mastered key knowledge. This practice is not consistent throughout the school. At times, teachers do not identify and address misconceptions or gaps in students' understanding.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress. Teachers take their needs into account when planning learning. The school's SEND team intervenes when students need extra support. For example, staff provide extra help for students who find reading difficult. These students catch up with their peers and succeed in their studies.

The school has a high proportion of disadvantaged students. They make the same strong progress as their peers.

The school's work to promote students' personal development is exemplary. It develops strong employability skills in students. All students take part in an excellent enrichment programme. Many students join the Combined Cadet Force. Others complete employer-led projects. All students take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

Careers education is a strength of the school. A comprehensive programme runs in all years. Students move to positive and appropriate destinations when they leave the school.

Leaders provide a well-planned programme of personal, social, health and economic education. Students learn to value the importance of democracy. They learn to respect others, especially those who are different from themselves. The school is an inclusive community where difference is valued.

The governing body has considerable expertise. The governors provide strong support for leaders. In many areas they also provide effective challenge. However, governors are not aware of the detail contained in some statutory guidance. They are unable to hold leaders to account in these areas. For example, inspectors found omissions in the school's SEND information report. Leaders have not provided governors with a suitable report about children looked after. Inspectors found no evidence that these omissions had adversely affected students. Students with SEND and children looked after are supported well in the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of keeping students safe throughout the school. Pastoral care is strong. Students and parents value the support that staff provide. Students know where to turn if they need support.

Leaders ensure that all staff are alert to the signs that students might need extra help. Staff use the school's systems well to pass on any concerns they have. Leaders deal with concerns quickly. They involve outside agencies appropriately to ensure that students receive appropriate and timely support when they need it.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in science is not as well sequenced as it is in other subjects. Learning is not always organised in a logical order. Consequently, students sometimes meet new concepts without having necessary prior knowledge in place. Leaders should ensure that the science curriculum is as well sequenced as the curriculum in other subjects.
- Teachers' use of assessment is not consistently effective throughout the school. Teachers do not consistently identify gaps in students' knowledge or their misconceptions. When this is the case, teaching does not address these gaps or misconceptions. Leader should ensure that teachers use assessment well to identify and address misconceptions and gaps in students' knowledge.
- Governors are unaware of the detail contained in some statutory guidance for schools, for example in relation to students with SEND and children looked after. Consequently, the school does not pay sufficient regard to some statutory guidance, and governors do not hold leaders to account for these gaps. Leaders and governors should ensure that they understand all statutory guidance that applies to the school. Governors should hold leaders properly to account in all areas of school life.

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.

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	138222
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10211750
Type of school	Technical
School category	University technical college
Age range of pupils	13 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	715
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	474
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Neil Scott
Principal	Daniel Locke-Wheaton
Website	www.auea.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 and 14 February 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school changed its admissions policy in September 2019. It now admits students into Years 9 and 12. Previously, it admitted students into Years 10 and 12. At the same time, the school reduced its pupil admission number to 81. Approximately two-thirds of students are therefore in the sixth form.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provider.

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Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the principal, and other senior leaders.
- Inspectors held online meetings with governors, including the chair of the governing body, and with a group of ex-students and representatives from the school's Industry Advisory Group.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and engineering. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and students, and looked at samples of students' work.
- Inspectors considered safeguarding by meeting with the designated safeguarding lead and another member of the safeguarding team, scrutinising policies and records relating to child protection and examining the safeguarding checks made on staff before they join the school.
- Inspectors considered responses from staff and students to their online inspection questionnaires.
- Inspectors spoke informally with students at breaktime and lunchtime. They observed the school at these times.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including written responses.

Inspection team

Alun Williams, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Richard Deane	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alexander Laney	Her Majesty's Inspector
Tim Bassett	Ofsted Inspector

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