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Dixons Croxteth Academy

Address: Carr Lane East, L11 4SG

Unique reference number (URN): 149530

Inspection report: 6 January 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	●
Expected standard	● ● ● ●
Needs attention	●
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard

Leadership and governance

Strong standard

The school joined the trust at the end of 2022 and, shortly after, appointed several new school leaders. Since then, the extent to which leaders have improved the school is commendable. This positive transformation is recognised by staff, parents and carers, and older pupils alike. This is a school to which they are proud to belong.

Leaders have worked closely with the trust to establish a highly accurate and insightful understanding of the quality of the school's provision. Together, they have astutely prioritised and addressed areas for improvement and rigorously monitored the effectiveness of their actions. The impact of leaders' work is evident. Pupils now benefit from a high-quality education. While there are some aspects of provision that need to develop further, particularly increasing pupils' attendance and improving outcomes in national examinations, this journey of improvement is already well underway. The trust has taken deliberate decisions to ensure that improvements are sustainable over time.

Underpinning school improvement is a highly effective professional learning programme that is carefully tailored to staff's individual requirements. This has successfully ensured that staff, including those early in their teaching career, have suitable knowledge and expertise. Leaders have established a culture where staff embrace opportunities to develop and improve. Staff feel revitalised. They particularly appreciate the consideration that is given to their wellbeing and workload at a time of much change.

Driven by a moral imperative to improve the life chances of pupils, leaders have worked tirelessly and successfully to transform this school.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Leaders have prioritised getting pupils into school. Highly effective systems have been established which enable leaders to rigorously monitor and track attendance. They use this information to intervene quickly to remove barriers that might prevent pupils from attending regularly. As a result, pupils' attendance has improved exceedingly quickly since the school joined the trust. Similarly, there has been a noteworthy reduction in the number of pupils who are persistently absent. This trend of improvement is evident across all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. Nevertheless, improvements in attendance have been from very low starting points. Too many pupils, including some vulnerable pupils, still do not attend school as often as they should.

Well-established routines help to ensure that the school is calm and orderly. Most pupils are quick to follow these routines and are respectful towards staff. Pupils respond well to leaders' approach to managing behaviour. Expectations of pupils are clear and staff take a consistent approach to upholding these. Typically, pupils are attentive to staff during lessons and comply with instructions quickly. Leaders have successfully created an environment

where bullying and discrimination are not tolerated. This helps pupils, including the growing number of girls, to feel at ease in school.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders are well informed about the quality of the curriculum and teaching. They use this information well to carefully target improvements.

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is appropriately broad, introducing national curriculum subjects that were not taught when the school joined the trust. They have also increased expectations of what pupils can do. For example, a high proportion of pupils study the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects. Subject curriculums are logically ordered to help pupils to build knowledge securely over time.

Staff are knowledgeable about the subjects that they teach. Typically, they use the school's agreed teaching and assessment strategies well to promote effective learning. In the main, staff are adept at adapting their teaching to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to access the curriculum.

Pupils' prior attainment is typically lower than that of their peers nationally when they join the school. This, coupled with weaknesses in the legacy curriculum, means that many pupils have gaps in their knowledge of reading, writing and number. Leaders have ensured that opportunities to revisit and practise this important knowledge is part of pupils' daily school experience. Those pupils with the biggest gaps in knowledge also benefit from additional support to help them to catch up quickly.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Since the school joined the trust, leaders have established thorough and effective systems to identify and assess any additional needs or barriers to learning that pupils may have. As a result, more pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are being identified. Suitable training ensures that staff are knowledgeable about pupils' needs. Typically, pupils with SEND benefit from an appropriate range of additional support or adaptations to enable them to access the curriculum.

The school has a particularly high proportion of disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils. Leaders have ensured that consideration of and support for these pupils is built into the school's daily routines and teaching strategies. Therefore, the pupil premium strategy is carefully aligned to the school's wider priorities. This funding is used effectively to help to reduce barriers to pupils' learning.

Leaders rigorously monitor the impact of their work to support vulnerable pupils. Where appropriate, leaders work with external agencies to provide any additional support that pupils might need. This includes the use of alternative provision for a very small number of pupils. Leaders remain closely involved in the education of these pupils to ensure that the provision meets pupils' needs successfully.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Leaders have recently redesigned the school's personal development programme. Careful thought has been given to ensuring that pupils develop the knowledge and skills that they need to navigate modern society successfully. The programme has been deliberately crafted with pupils' needs and the local context in mind. For example, in recognition of the growing diversity in the local community, leaders have prioritised pupils learning about different faiths, beliefs and values. Similarly, leaders have thoughtfully approached the teaching of sensitive topics, such as relationships and sex education and health education, given the small but growing number of girls who attend the school. Most pupils develop an appropriate understanding of this important knowledge. They learn how to keep themselves safe and they know about the fundamental British values, such as democracy.

Leaders offer a wide range of enrichment opportunities, some of which are built into the school day to ensure that all pupils can participate. These opportunities include extra-curricular clubs, such as crochet and rowing, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, and trips, including whole-school wellbeing walks. Many pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, enjoy participating in these activities. They appreciate these opportunities to nurture new talents and interests and to develop their confidence and resilience.

The school's careers programme is built around keeping pupils' aspirations on track, so that they sustain ambitious and well-informed goals as they progress through the school. Pupils receive useful information about the different opportunities that are available to them. Alongside this, they benefit from independent guidance to help them to make appropriate and ambitious choices about their next steps. Leaders are in the process of further strengthening some aspects of the careers programme. For example, they are continuing to develop opportunities for pupils to participate in work experience. Nevertheless, leaders have worked diligently and successfully to ensure that the vast majority of pupils secure a place in education, employment or training when they leave school.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention

Over time, pupils have not achieved well in national examinations at the end of key stage 4. There are some early indications of improvement in pupils' outcomes in 2025, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. However, on most measures, pupils' achievement remains well below that of their peers nationally. This is due to large gaps in pupils' knowledge over time. That said, leaders have made great strides in ensuring that the vast majority of pupils successfully progress to education, employment or training when they leave Year 11.

Improvements to the quality of the curriculum and teaching mean that, in the main, pupils currently in the school are making positive progress through the curriculum. Typically, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are building knowledge securely in each subject. Even so, leaders' actions to

address sizeable gaps in some pupils' foundational knowledge, such as reading and number facts, are ongoing.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Since the school joined the trust, it has been on a rapid journey of improvement. This ongoing positive transformation permeates every aspect of the school's provision. The proportion of pupils in the school who are disadvantaged is well above the national average. Leaders' work to turn the school around is underpinned by their dedication to raising pupils' aspirations and improving their life opportunities.

Leaders have created a community with a real sense of pride and belonging at its heart. This is built upon the warm and trusting relationships that pupils have with staff and with each other. Leaders act decisively to resolve any concerns that pupils may have, including rare instances of bullying. Pupils feel happy, valued and safe in school. This includes the growing number of girls in key stage 3 who have joined since the school became co-educational.

Increasingly, pupils value their education and this is evident in their improving rates of attendance. Many enjoy their learning. In lessons, pupils usually settle quickly to focus on the task in hand. Pupils are benefiting from the improvements that leaders have made to the quality of the curriculum and teaching. Staff routinely use teaching strategies that help to reduce barriers to learning that pupils may have. In the main, pupils build appropriate knowledge across the curriculum. However, these improvements are not reflected in pupils' achievement in national tests at the end of Year 11. This remains well below the national average.

Pupils are encouraged to lead change and to actively support others. For instance, some pupils have taken responsibility for redesigning the 'heart space' at the centre of the school. Others have trained as 'peer mental health champions' to support any peers having a difficult time. These opportunities beyond the curriculum help pupils to develop an array of skills that prepare them well to become positive members of modern society.

Next steps

• Leaders should continue to swiftly identify and address gaps in the knowledge of older pupils so that these pupils benefit fully from the improvements to curriculum and teaching and achieve well.
• Leaders should continue to implement their strategy to reduce any ongoing barriers to pupils' attendance so that the number of pupils who attend school regularly continues to increase.

About this inspection

This school is part of Dixons 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), Luke Sparkes, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Michael Blackburn.

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

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the principal and other senior leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator and the designated safeguarding lead, during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with representatives of the local authority, a group of trustees, including the chair of the board of trustees, the CEO and other trust leaders.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school makes use of three alternative provisions, including one that is unregistered.

The school opened as a new school when it joined Dixons Academies Trust in November 2022. The current principal was appointed later that academic year. A large number of new leaders and staff have joined the school since that time.

Principal: Iain Duggan

Lead inspector:
Sally Rix, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Craig Yates, Ofsted Inspector
Gil Bourgade, Ofsted Inspector
Sue Farrimond, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

This data is from 6 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

405
Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

600
Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,152

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

58.02%
Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.22%
Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

22.72%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Well above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	15.7%	45.2%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	14.9%	45.9%	Below
2022/23		45.3%	

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	31.5	45.9	Below
2023/24	27.9	45.9	Below
2022/23		46.3	

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	-0.94	-0.03	Below
2022/23		-0.03	

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	16.1%	25.6%	Below
2023/24	11.8%	25.8%	Below
2022/23		25.2%	

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	30.2	34.9	Close to average
2023/24	23.3	34.6	Below
2022/23		35.0	

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	-1.21	-0.57	Below
2022/23		-0.57	

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25	16.1%	52.8%	-36.7 pp
2023/24	11.8%	53.1%	-41.4 pp
2022/23		52.4%	

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25	30.2	50.3	-20.1
2023/24	23.3	50.0	-26.7
2022/23		50.3	

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24	-1.21	0.16	-1.37
2022/23		0.17	

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 terms)	13.0%	8.1%	Above
2023/24	18.8%	8.9%	Above
2022/23	23.0%	9.0%	Above

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 terms)	37.8%	21.9%	Above
2023/24	50.7%	25.6%	Above
2022/23	62.7%	26.5%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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