

Inspection of Spark Vale Academy

CRT House, 176 Melton Road, Leicester, Leicestershire LE4 5EE

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 June 2025

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Insufficient evidence

Behaviour and attitudes

Insufficient evidence

Personal development

Insufficient evidence

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Insufficient evidence

Does the school meet the independent
school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

There are currently no pupils on roll at this school, but the Department for Education (DfE), which is the registration authority for independent schools, asked Ofsted to inspect it. The school has not enrolled any pupils since its pre-registration inspection in September 2024. It plans to admit pupils from September 2025.

The school's ambition for pupils to 'belong, grow and thrive' is not fully realised. This is because its curriculum does not adequately consider the specific needs and aptitudes of the pupils who are likely to attend.

The school intends to collaborate with local artists to broaden its curriculum offer. It will also access nearby recreational facilities to provide sports and outdoor learning opportunities. It plans to work with community organisations to enable pupils to explore how nature, conservation and horticulture can improve the locality.

The school's behaviour policy sets out rewards for positive behaviour. However, the school's wider strategies for managing inappropriate behaviour are unclear. For example, there are no clear procedures for searching pupils or confiscating items. This leaves staff and pupils without the necessary guidance that they need to establish and maintain consistent routines for pupils' behaviour and safety.

The arrangements for pupils' welfare and safety, including first-aid provision and emergency exit arrangements, are not sufficiently well considered. They do not meet the requirements of the independent school standards (the standards).

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

The school has been in operation for a short time, albeit with no pupils. Until recently, the proprietor was also the headteacher. A new leadership structure has provided further capacity. However, there remains uncertainty regarding leaders' roles and responsibilities at the school, including at governance level. The school's policies lack clarity. They do not define staff's responsibilities, including those of the proprietor, sufficiently well. Furthermore, several policies contain factual inaccuracies. This means it is highly unlikely that they could be implemented effectively.

The school is reliant on external support to provide strategic leadership. It lacks strong mechanisms for the proprietor to ensure that the standards are consistently and securely met. This includes the requirements related to the curriculum and to pupils' welfare, health and safety.

The school has not considered the full scope of its safeguarding duties, including measures to prevent pupils from leaving the building unnoticed. A fire door leads to an unkept area with multiple hazards and busy main roads. This has the potential to place pupils at risk of harm. In addition, the school has not established a comprehensive system for reporting and recording first-aid incidents.

The school has a broad curriculum that is designed to educate pupils in English, mathematics, science, technology, humanities, physical education and the arts. However, the school does not have an appropriate curriculum for students in the sixth form. It is reliant on using curriculum content from its secondary curriculum.

To support their workload, teachers will be able to access online resources to deliver the school's curriculum. These resources do not adequately address how the additional needs of prospective pupils, including students in the sixth form, will be met. The school's plan to integrate a therapeutic approach alongside academic learning to support pupils' social, emotional and mental health is underdeveloped. While the school intends to assess pupils on entry, the precise nature of these assessments have not been determined. The key systems necessary for implementing the curriculum effectively such as staff training and assessment frameworks lack cohesion.

Each classroom has a designated reading area. The school has established links with the local library, which it intends for pupils to visit often. The school's early reading programme is underdeveloped. Currently, there is no strategic oversight to consider how specialist programmes will be used to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in their reading alongside phonics programmes. Many key decisions for the school's reading curriculum, including strategies for supporting pupils who require additional help to catch up, remain unresolved.

For secondary-age pupils, the school has a careers programme that meets the requirements of the standards. This includes impartial information about different professions and courses. However, the offer for post-16 students, including work experience and preparation for next steps, is significantly underdeveloped. This does not align with the school's stated ambition to equip students effectively for their next stage in life or support their readiness for adulthood.

The school has established systems for recording all the information required by current statutory guidance when pupils are admitted. In addition, the school understands its responsibility to maintain accurate attendance registers. However, its policies and procedures regarding the processes for removing a pupil from roll lack clarity.

The curriculums to support pupils' personal, social, health and economic education and relationships and sex education and health education are sufficient to meet the requirements of the standards. Pupils will learn about the importance of fundamental British values such as equality, liberty, tolerance and respect. The school intends to draw on the diversity of its multicultural local community to promote pupils' understanding of different groups in society. Some aspects of the school's wider enrichment provision are still being developed, including the extra-curricular offer.

The school has an accessibility plan which is suitable to fulfil schedule 10 of the Equalities Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The inspection team could not gather sufficient evidence to make a judgement about the school's arrangements for safeguarding or whether the school meets the safeguarding requirements of the standards as there are no pupils on roll.

What does the school need to do to improve? (information for the school and proprietor)

- The proprietor has not ensured that the school's premises meet the requirements of the standards. Appropriate and safe fire exits are not in place. Pupils can leave the site unnoticed. This places pupils and staff at risk of harm. The proprietor must ensure that the school meets all the standards consistently and securely.
- The school does not meet the health and safety requirements of the standards. Systems for recording and reporting first-aid incidents are not fully established. The proprietor must ensure the requirements of the standards linked to pupils' welfare, health and safety are consistently met.
- The school, including governors, do not have a secure understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They have not undertaken the necessary action to ensure that the standards are met consistently. This means that support and accountability structures are unclear. This has the potential for the school to be unaware of weaknesses and failings. The proprietor should ensure that there are clear lines of support and accountability to ensure that the standards are met securely over time.
- The curriculum does not sufficiently consider the needs and aptitudes of prospective pupils and students in the sixth form, especially those pupils with SEND. This will make it difficult for pupils to learn well and achieve all that they could. The school should ensure that its curriculum takes into account the additional needs and any barriers to learning likely to be experienced by its pupils.
- The school's reading curriculum lacks cohesion and does not enable pupils to acquire the necessary literacy skills. Specialist reading programmes and the school's phonics curriculum do not align to support pupils at the early stages of learning to read. The proprietor should ensure that the reading provision is cohesive and well sequenced so that it will enable all pupils to develop increasing fluency, accuracy and independence in reading.
- The behaviour policy does not set out clear systems and processes for the management of behaviour such as defining procedures for conducting searches or confiscating items. This absence increases the risk of inconsistent implementation of the school's routines and expectations. The proprietor must ensure that all policies, particularly those related to behaviour, are clearly articulated and understood by all staff.
- The school has not ensured that its post-16 provision meets the requirements of the standards. It does not currently have a well-considered curriculum for

students in the sixth form. Opportunities for work experience and preparation for adulthood are not in place. This will not enable students to achieve well or be fully prepared for their next stages in education, training or employment. The proprietor must ensure that it meets the requirements of the standards for students above compulsory school age.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	151121
DfE registration number	856/6039
Local authority	Leicester
Inspection number	10395736
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	0
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	0
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	CRT Enterprises Limited
Headteacher	Katie James
Annual fees (day pupils)	£57,000
Telephone number	0116 2665920
Website	www.sparkvaleacademy.co.uk
Email address	mital.thanki@spark-academy.co.uk

Information about this school

- This was the school's first standard inspection. The school was registered by the DfE in September 2024.
- The school operates from CRT House, 176 Melton Road, Leicester, Leicestershire, LE4 5EE.
- The proprietor is CRT Enterprises Limited.
- The school intends to provide full-time education for pupils aged 11 to 18 years. All pupils are likely to have an education, health and care plan. The school intends to admit pupils from Leicester local authority and other nearby areas.
- The school is registered to admit 45 pupils. Currently, there are no pupils on roll. The school plans to enrol pupils from September 2025. These pupils are likely to have a primary diagnosis of autism and/or social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The headteacher was appointed in April 2025.
- The school does not currently make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

The front cover of the report shows the judgements that inspectors were not able to make because they could not gather sufficient evidence as there are currently no pupils on roll at the school.

Inspectors were unable to gather sufficient evidence to judge whether all of the standards relating to the quality of education; the school's spiritual, moral, social and cultural offer; welfare, health and safety; and complaints were met.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received 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 proprietor, the headteacher, other school leaders and the chair of governors.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single

central record; took account of the views of leaders and staff; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

- The inspectors looked at a range of documents, including leaders' priorities for improvement, school policies and risk assessments. Inspectors also considered the school's documents relating to health and safety.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff expressed through Ofsted's online survey.

Inspection team

Shaheen Hussain, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Deirdre Duignan

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work-
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an education, health and care plan.
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
 - 2(2)(b) that pupils acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills;
 - 2(2)(g) where the school has pupils above compulsory school age, a programme of activities which is appropriate to their needs;
 - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that-
 - 9(a) a written behaviour policy that, amongst other matters, sets out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupil misbehaviour.
- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
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