

Ipsley CE RSA Academy

Winyates Way, Redditch, B98 0UB

Inspection dates 17–18 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Since the academy opened, the principal has demonstrated an impressive clarity of focus, establishing very high expectations and clear procedures. These have improved rapidly the quality of teaching and pupils’ progress.
- Governors are highly perceptive and have responded expertly to changing local and national circumstances. The principal has drawn on effective support from other schools within the academy family.
- Pupils achieve standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are broadly in line with those expected by the time they leave the academy. This represents good progress from often low starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils also make good progress, helping them to catch up with pupils nationally.
- Pupils feel very secure, and the academy’s work to keep them safe is outstanding. Bullying is extremely rare.
- Pupils take a noticeable pride in their work, and readily comply with expectations. Their behaviour in lessons is good, and they are orderly and responsible outside the classroom.
- The curriculum has been adapted to cater for pupils of differing ages and aptitudes, and this prepares them effectively for the next stage in their education.
- Most lessons are well planned and adapted to interest and challenge all groups. Teaching in practical and creative subjects is particularly strong, and literacy is promoted vigorously.
- PE and sports funding is used exceptionally well, in part to extend an impressive programme of clubs and extra activities.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers’ marking is not always helpful. Some does not show pupils how to improve their work.
- There is no overall plan for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural education to ensure that pupils are fully prepared for later life in modern Britain.
- Some leaders have not yet developed a full understanding of how their work fits into the academy’s development, or the skills to evaluate its impact.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 24 lessons taught by 21 different teachers; one of these lessons was seen jointly with the principal. Visits were made to the library, 'The Hub' withdrawal room, form time and an assembly, and inspectors observed pupils' conduct at break and lunchtimes.
- Discussions were held with the principal, other leaders, class teachers, the Chair and another member of the governing body, the academy's school improvement partner, and a representative of the RSA Academies Trust, the sponsors.
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils, two selected at random, and spoke with many others informally, particularly in class. An inspector listened to five pupils reading at length.
- Pupils' work was reviewed in lessons, and inspectors looked additionally at a range of books in greater depth, including some from last academic year.
- Throughout the inspection, inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents, both on paper and online. These included: development plans and their evaluations; minutes of governing body meetings; case studies; policies; safeguarding records; teachers' plans; and school publicity and newsletters. Inspectors looked in detail at the analysis the school undertakes to track pupils' progress through the final two years of Key Stage 2 and the first two years of Key Stage 3.
- Inspectors took into consideration the 24 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire, 59 responses to a short survey of Year 5 parents, and one letter from an individual parent. The 40 responses to the questionnaire for school staff were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Martin Spoor, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kevin Harrison	Additional Inspector
Helen Owen	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ipsley CE RSA Academy admits pupils into Year 5 and they leave in Year 8. It is much smaller than most secondary schools, but the number of pupils is rising.
- Ipsley CE RSA Academy opened as an academy school on 1 January 2013, sponsored by the RSA Academies Trust.
- A local trust has been formed comprising Ipsley CE RSA Academy and Arrow Vale RSA Academy, which provides for students aged 13 to 19. An increasing number of teachers work at both schools, and some policies are common to both institutions. Both these schools are members of the wider RSA family of academies. The Diocese of Worcester is a partner, and Ipsley is a Church of England Academy.
- The very large majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds, with a few others coming from several different ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and eligible for the pupil premium is well above the national average.
- On the most recent data available, the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or substantial additional needs is well above average; the proportion identified with less substantial additional needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils by the end of Year 6.
- At the time of the inspection, two pupils on the academy roll were receiving their education at The Forge short-stay school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teachers apply the academy's marking policy effectively, so that pupils in all classes receive helpful written guidance about how to improve their work.
- Consolidate the recent improvements in the leadership of the academy by:
 - sharing best practice and ensuring all leaders understand fully the academy's priorities and improvement strategies
 - training all leaders in the skills required to evaluate the impact of their actions.
- Further develop the curriculum, including a coordinated programme to foster pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The principal sets exemplary standards, and provides energetic leadership entirely focused on raising achievement. Since the academy opened, she has laid down clear rules and procedures for pupils' behaviour, established a rigorous system for tracking pupils' progress and intervening to support those at risk of falling behind, secured the safety of pupils on the site, and made sure that all staff recognise that they are accountable for the work they do. As a direct result, the academy has made impressive progress in 18 months, and there is an excellent basis for further improvement.
- The sponsors and the other academies in the family have been essential to these improvements. They have provided: leaders, including the principal; a school improvement partner who is a National Leader in Education; and well-trying systems which the academy has adapted successfully to its own context. The recruitment of good teachers with the subject knowledge required for teaching Key Stage 3 pupils has been made much easier by appointing them to the local trust.
- Other leaders in the academy share the principal's enthusiasm and fully subscribe to continuous improvement. The team balances expertise from Key Stages 2 and 3, and individuals have been appointed with the skills to take the academy forward. Many are new to their current responsibilities, and some are not yet fully aware of how their work fits in to the academy's overall priorities or how these will be achieved.
- The academy's self-evaluation is broadly accurate and constitutes a secure basis for development planning. Its analysis and interpretation of pupils' performance is not consistently based on comparison with national data, and some leaders are unable to evaluate precisely the impact of their work on pupils' progress and well-being. Teaching is monitored regularly and effectively, and this has led to several staff leaving, giving the opportunity for new appointments.
- Leaders evaluate teachers' performance effectively and use the results to make decisions about pay rises and promotion. The academy has invested heavily in training, and staff, including teachers at an early stage of their careers, report that this has brought enormous benefits.
- Leaders have improved the curriculum, balancing the sponsors' commitment to creativity with an emphasis on reading, writing and mathematics. At Key Stage 3, setting and teachers' subject specialism are given a higher priority. The pattern and content of lessons are planned to prepare older pupils for upper school. The academy has developed a new approach to assessment, and is on the way to implementing it. Key assessments are checked for accuracy by other schools and introduce pupils to formal testing.
- The academy generally promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through taught lessons, form time and trips. However, leaders are aware of the need to review and coordinate these activities in order to fully prepare pupils for future life in modern Britain. Year 8 pupils are encouraged to consider their future careers, and aspire to higher education. It provides an impressive range of clubs and additional activities: nearly half the pupils take part in sporting activities weekly. This is supported by the primary school PE and sports funding, which is also making a significant contribution to achievement in PE and pupils' healthy lifestyles.
- Funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used effectively on direct support and its organisation. The funding's impact is rigorously monitored and evaluated, and discussed with governors. The spending of the Year 7 catch-up funding on intensive help and guidance in both literacy and numeracy has been highly effective, with over two thirds of supported pupils reaching expected levels of attainment during the year.
- The academy works well with parents, and has won over almost all of those who were initially suspicious of change. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors have an absolute and well-informed commitment to the academy's pupils, and have made an outstanding contribution to its leadership. They have a clear vision for the future, which encompasses raising academic standards as well as working with the sponsor and the diocese to enhance creativity and develop pupils' spiritual and cultural understanding. They have evaluated their progress to date, and made significant changes in the structure of governance to work more effectively with the partner school in the local trust. They are finely aware of the tension between collaborative working and preserving the identity of the academy. Strict financial controls are in place. They are imaginative and sensitive in developing respect for people of other faiths and preparing pupils for life outside the local area.
- The governing body fulfils all its obligations. It is highly supportive of the principal, but is prepared to challenge her judgements. Governors are familiar with national measures of achievement and receive reports on the quality of teaching. They check on the progress of groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, and on curriculum developments. They manage effectively the performance of the principal, and consider recommendations based on the performance management of teachers. Governors visit the school to make their own assessments of progress. The governing body ensures the school's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils are very positive about how happy and safe they feel, and a large majority of parents agree. Leaders have redesigned the site so that it is very secure and all staff are rigorously checked for their suitability to work with children. Case studies show that the academy liaises very effectively with other agencies to protect children when the need arises.
- Pupils report that bullying is very rare. They know about different types of bullying, and the academy provides regular information about how to keep safe, including internet safety. They have complete confidence in the staff to resolve any problems.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. They understand why they come to the academy, and the attitudes they need to be successful. They appreciate the rules and routines, and link them to the improvements that have been made in behaviour and pupils' progress. They also feel involved in decision-making - for example, about the size of planners - and this increases their commitment. They consistently show respect for the staff, for each other and for the fabric of the academy.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is constructive, and they collaborate willingly and effectively. They care greatly about their progress, and this is shown in the presentation of their work. Pupils respond promptly to staff requests and low-level disruption is rare, although occasionally instructions have to be repeated for them to be silent during discussion or to make adequate progress with their written work. The calm atmosphere engendered at the start of the day is an ideal preparation for learning.
- Behaviour at break and lunchtime is sensible and considerate, encouraged by effective supervision and the provision of sports equipment such as skipping ropes and hoops.
- The academy's insistence on high standards of behaviour led to a rise in fixed term exclusions. Leaders have successfully explored alternatives such as isolation and 'red cards', and pupils who require the greatest help with their behaviour complete a short spell at The Forge short-stay school. These strategies, together with the widespread acceptance of the behaviour policy, have now caused the exclusion rate to fall.
- The academy has adopted rigorous procedures to track and improve attendance, including monitoring each lesson and texting parents and carers on the first day of absence. As a result, attendance has risen significantly since the academy opened, and is now average. The attendance of almost all groups of pupils is comparable. The proportion of pupils who are absent persistently is below average.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils' work, the academy's assessment data and inspectors' direct observations in lessons all indicate that the quality of teaching is good. Since the academy opened, the principal has improved teaching and ensured that it helps all groups of pupils to make good progress. Pupils say that most lessons are fun, while allowing them to learn new skills and develop their understanding. Rewards are much in evidence, and almost all teachers use consistently the school's procedures for managing behaviour.
- In most lessons, the teachers carefully plan work at the right level of difficulty for all ability groups in the class, and learning proceeds at a swift pace. The work set for less-able pupils is broken down into smaller steps to give them confidence and secure basic understanding before moving on. Teachers ask probing questions to check pupils' understanding, and adjust the difficulty of the tasks if necessary.
- Literacy is promoted in an impressive variety of ways: pupils read in different contexts, discuss subject-specific vocabulary, and have the opportunity to explain themselves orally at length. In discussion with inspectors, teachers were able to provide a reliable assessment of their own effectiveness.
- Provision for more-able pupils, including the few who are particularly able, is good as a result of teachers' high expectations and the challenge planned in to lessons. For example, in a mathematics lesson on Pythagoras's theorem, Year 7 pupils were introduced to work at GCSE level. In a Year 5 music lesson, they were able to develop their keyboard skills at an outstanding rate. Where more-able pupils had the opportunity to select different levels of work, healthy competition led them to choose the more demanding option.
- In the few lessons seen where pupils made slower progress, teachers did not gain a reliable understanding of pupils' progress, and the work for some pupils was not challenging enough.
- Teachers plan work carefully for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. For example, in PE lesson developing netball skills, an additional adult was deployed to work with a disabled pupil, enabling them to make outstanding progress. In many instances, teaching assistants make an important contribution to these pupils' learning and progress.
- Almost all of the books seen were thoroughly marked, and assessment was usually accurate. Many teachers provided clear feedback about what pupils should do to improve, in line with the academy's policy, but sometimes this expectation was not met. Relevant homework is set regularly, and makes a good contribution to pupils' progress.

The achievement of pupils is good

- In 2014, attainment in Year 6 national tests was average, and the proportion of pupils making expected progress was also average. The proportion of pupils exceeding expected progress was below average. However, these outcomes represented in almost all respects a significant improvement on the academy's 2013 test results.
- The Year 6 national tests do not provide a secure basis upon which to measure achievement because pupils spend the first two years of Key Stage 2 in different schools. The academy conducts its own standardised baseline tests in Year 5, and regularly monitors attainment and progress from this starting point. The tests show that, on average, pupils enter the academy with attainment in reading, writing and mathematics below that typical for their age, and are on track to leave Year 8 with average attainment, having made good progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils end Year 6 approximately three terms behind other pupils nationally in reading, two terms in writing and over three terms in mathematics. Their rates of progress are above that of other pupils nationally. They make similar progress to other pupils within the academy.
- The most able pupils make good progress, as shown in the lessons observed by inspectors and the

academy's tracking data. In the relevant lessons, teachers' planning includes tasks which provide an appropriate level of challenge, and they are keen to meet the stretching targets they are set. In 2014 the academy for the first time entered pupils for the Level 6 tests in mathematics, and 4% were successful.

- On average, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make broadly similar progress to that of their peers in the school. In the lessons observed, it was often seen to be good or outstanding.
- Pupils are enthusiastic readers, supported by a well-stocked and refurbished library. The comprehensive promotion of literacy, careful curriculum planning and good progress in reading, writing and mathematics ensure that pupils are ready for upper school.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	139020
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	447830

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	447
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Will Adams
Principal	Patricia Hammond
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01527 525725
Fax number	01527 523457
Email address	office@ipsleyacademy.co.uk

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