

Inspection of a good school: Rowley Park Primary Academy

Highfield Grove, Rowley Park, Stafford, Staffordshire ST17 9RF

Inspection dates:

11 and 12 October 2022

Outcome

Rowley Park Primary Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where everyone is welcome. Pupils feel safe because staff look after them. Pupils enjoy being surrounded by their friends. They look forward to coming to school. They enjoy learning new things every day.

School leaders have high expectations of staff and pupils. They want everyone in the school to strive to be the best they can be. Staff and pupils live up to this expectation and work hard every day.

Pupils embody the school's motto, 'Be ready, be respectful, be safe'. They listen well and focus on their work, therefore learning is rarely disrupted. Pupils enjoy working in pairs, or as a team. The dining room is a relaxed and chatty setting. Pupils move around the corridors sensibly. They are helpful and display good manners. On the playground, pupils enjoy playing with their friends. Bullying hardly ever happens. Pupils have full confidence in staff that any incidents will be dealt with quickly.

Most parents speak positively about the school. They are pleased that their children enjoy school. In addition, they value the wide and varied range of after-school clubs that their children can attend. From coding club to gymnastics, there is something for everyone.

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

School leaders, supported by the multi-academy trust (MAT) leaders, have carefully considered the learning that pupils experience across the school. Leaders have mapped out the knowledge, skills and vocabulary that pupils will learn in and across year groups. As a result, teachers know what to teach and when to teach it. Teachers value this clear direction. Some subjects, such as geography and history, are delivered through the school's 'NICER' curriculum. Leaders have personalised this aspect of the curriculum to meet the needs and backgrounds of pupils in the school. However, the focus on developing pupils' knowledge, skills and vocabulary has not been lost. As a result, pupils achieve well across the curriculum.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They explain new learning in a clear and structured manner, which builds on what pupils have learned before. Where teachers discover gaps in pupils' knowledge, they adapt activities, backtrack, and fill these gaps. There is a relentless focus on developing pupils' language and vocabulary from Nursery to Year 6. Teachers model subject-specific language accurately. Pupils are starting to mirror this when explaining their own understanding.

Subject leaders play an important role in developing the curriculum. Some have organised a range of training linked to their subject area. Staff appreciate this training and say it has supported them in their role. Several subject leaders are relatively new to their role. They have not yet had the opportunity, or received the support required, to further develop their subject area.

Reading has a high priority in the school. Staff teach phonics in a consistent manner because they have been trained well. From the start, children and pupils develop their reading skills effectively. Staff support any pupils who fall behind with their reading, so they can catch up and keep up. Pupils' reading books are matched closely to their phonic ability. Teachers promote the love of reading through the English curriculum, regular story times and special events.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) follow the same curriculum as their peers. Teachers consider the needs of pupils with SEND when they plan lessons and activities. They provide additional resources and support to help pupils with their learning when required. Staff step in quickly if a pupil needs extra help. Any extra work for pupils is purposeful and focuses specifically on their needs.

Pupils appreciate the extensive range of after-school clubs on offer. They value the trips they have been on this year, such as the visit to the National Memorial Arboretum. Pupils know about the different types of relationships and families that exist in their local community. They understand how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and their knowledge of mental health is developing. Pupils' understanding of democracy is secure. However, their knowledge of different faiths and beliefs is limited and, at times, confused. Despite this, pupils say that everyone, regardless of their religion or background, is welcome in their school.

School leaders, supported by the academy council and the MAT, continue to improve the school. Leaders focus on giving pupils access to a rich curriculum through wide and varied learning experiences, in and out of the classroom.

Leaders have taken action to make workload more manageable for staff. For example, they reviewed the feedback and marking policy, which staff welcome. Staff say that leaders are approachable, listen to their concerns and are considerate of their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is everyone's business. Leaders and staff do all they can to make sure that pupils are safe. Leaders organise safeguarding training for all staff. Consequently, staff know how to spot when a pupil might be at risk of harm. They also know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil's welfare. Teachers help pupils to understand how to keep themselves safe when working online.

Leaders have introduced a new programme in school. This supports pupils if they need help to manage their feelings, or if they are struggling with the social aspects of school life.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some subject leaders are relatively new to their role. As a result, they have not had the opportunity to make checks on their curriculum area to discover what is working well and what may need to improve. Leaders need to provide these subject leaders with the opportunity and ongoing support to develop their curriculum area effectively.
- Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum is sufficiently focused on developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of different faiths and beliefs. Consequently, pupils' knowledge of these is limited and, at times, confused. Leaders and staff need to make sure that the curriculum develops pupils' knowledge and understanding of faiths and beliefs that are different to their own.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2017.

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.

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	140996
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10227120
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	193
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gurinder Singh Josan
Headteacher	Annika Beaumont
Website	www.rowleyparkacademy.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	25 and 26 April 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Victoria Academies Trust.
- The school has a breakfast club and an after-school club operating on the site. This provision is operated by the school.
- The school has a nursery that admits three-year-olds.
- Leaders make use of a registered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken this into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the director of schools. He met with the chair of the trust board and two members of the academy council, including the chair. The inspector also met with the chief education officer of the trust.

- The inspector held meetings with leaders to discuss safeguarding and provision for pupils with SEND.
- As part of the inspection, the inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, he discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspector spoke to groups of pupils formally and informally about their learning and experiences at school. A group of pupils accompanied the inspector on a personal development learning walk around the school.
- Safeguarding documents were checked, including the checks that leaders make on staff's suitability to work with children. The inspector checked that staff implement safeguarding policies and procedures effectively across the school.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, and the free-text responses received during the inspection.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- The inspector looked at a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation, school development plan, school policies, curriculum documents, SEND records and minutes of meetings held by the trust board and the academy council.

Inspection team

Wayne Simner, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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