

# The Rural Enterprise Academy

Rodbaston Campus, Penkridge, ST19 5PH

<b>Inspection dates</b>		12–13 March 2014	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Most students have made good progress in their learning from their low starting points when they joined in Year 10, especially in English where their progress is outstanding.
- The curriculum is well suited to students' interests and intended career paths, particularly for those wanting to work with animals.
- Teaching in English and business studies is outstanding and most of it is good in other subjects.
- Students behave well in lessons and they are kept safe in the academy.
- Senior leaders and governors provide effective leadership and ensure improvement in teaching and achievement. They are highly committed to the academy and share a strong vision for students to succeed academically and in life.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the high level of personal care and support their children receive. Vulnerable students are well supported. Guidance for students' next steps in their education is good.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students do not make as much progress in mathematics as they do in English.
- A small proportion of teaching requires improvement. Teaching does not always stretch the most-able students.
- There has been limited external verification of the quality of the academy's work.
- Leadership responsibilities have not been extended to subject coordinators.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons, of which five were jointly observed with either the Principal or the Assistant Principal. In addition, inspectors made a number of other short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, three parents, members of staff including senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, and representatives of the main sponsor, South Staffordshire College.
- There were insufficient responses for inspectors to take account of the online questionnaire, Parent View. However, inspectors took note of an academy questionnaire completed by 40 parents at a parents' meeting the night before the inspection started and two emails received from parents.
- Inspectors took account of surveys completed by 11 members of staff.
- A visit was made by an inspector to see the animal-care provision delivered by South Staffordshire College on the same site as the academy.
- Inspectors observed the academy's work and scrutinised a number of documents, including the academy's own self-evaluation, data on students' recent attainment and progress, behaviour and attendance logs, policies including safeguarding, external reviews including reports from the Department for Education.

## Inspection team

Mark Sims, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Colin Lower

Additional Inspector

Glen Goddard

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school and is sponsored by South Staffordshire College, Veolia and the National Farmers Union.
- The large majority of students come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is low as is that of those known to speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students supported through the pupil premium (pupils for whom the academy receives additional funding, including those known to be eligible for free school meals) is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action plus, school action or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- The academy opened as a free school in September 2012. Consequently, no students have yet taken GCSE examinations so there is no data to compare with the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The academy currently has students in Years 10 and 11 only. There are plans for a sixth form to open in September 2014.
- The academy offers up to 9 GCSEs and 5 BTEC qualifications.
- The academy is currently under subscribed.
- No students receive off-site alternative provision.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase students' progress in mathematics to be in line with that in English by making sure that:
  - teaching in mathematics is as good as it is in most subjects
  - more-able students are consistently challenged to do as well as they can in all of their lessons
  - additional support and intervention are effective for all students involved.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
  - extending leadership responsibilities to include subject leaders
  - ensuring greater external validation of the work of the academy.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students are on track to achieve broadly average standards of five or more GCSE grades A\* to C including English and mathematics. On entry to Year 10, students' attainment was below that usually found at the end of Year 9. There are no examination results available for past cohorts but the current Year 11 have been tracked closely at regular intervals under examination conditions. Students' work in their books and regular checking by senior leaders indicate that assessment information is accurate.
- The proportion of students making expected or more-than-expected progress in English and mathematics since the start of Year 10 is higher than the latest equivalent national results of expected or more-than-expected progress from Key Stage 2 to 4.
- Students are doing better in English, where they are making exceptional progress, than in mathematics. There was a dip in the progress students made in mathematics at the beginning of this academic year due to weak teaching which has been swiftly rectified. As a result of recent interventions and staff changes, students are now making more rapid progress.
- Progress is good in all other subjects. The progress of different groups of students, including those receiving additional support in literacy or numeracy, is checked rigorously by senior leaders,.
- The gap in attainment in English and mathematics, between students eligible for the pupil premium and that of other students, is narrowing for the small numbers of students involved in Year 11. There is no attainment gap at all between the larger proportion of students eligible for free school meals and others in Year 10.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers, as do the very small number of minority ethnic students who do not have English as their first language.
- In lessons seen during the inspection, students made more rapid progress in those lessons where tasks were challenging for all groups of learners. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson students assessed each other's essays using the GCSE grade criteria. This enabled them to understand better what they had to do to reach their own target grade.
- More-able students are not always stretched in every lesson to do as well as they can, although they are set challenging targets to achieve the highest possible grades. The school has not considered early entry to GCSE examinations for some students.
- Most parents who responded to the academy survey felt that, overall, their children had made good progress. A small minority acknowledged there had been some disruption to their children's learning in mathematics.

### The quality of teaching is good

- The majority of teaching is good and some, particularly in English and business studies, is outstanding.

- Teachers mostly set high expectations for all students to achieve as well as they can. Tasks are challenging but engaging for students, who enjoy their learning. Students' interests and future ambitions are well supported and there is a high level of emphasis on practical activities. Students are inspired to learn through working with animals in a real farm environment.
- Most teachers are very successful at setting work that is appropriate for more-able students and those who find learning difficult. They deploy additional adults well to provide effective support and are successful at getting students to help each other.
- Students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The very best marking contains clear written guidance on how to reach their target grade. In English and business studies, students are involved in assessing their own and others' assignments which, in turn, helps them with their own work.
- Teachers help students to develop their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills – for example, identifying key vocabulary that will be required across all their subjects. There is effective extra help to support those who have fallen behind in literacy and numeracy.
- In a small number of lessons and intervention sessions where teaching requires improvement, students all do similar tasks which do not sufficiently stretch the most-able.
- No inadequate teaching was seen during the inspection. However, leaders' records indicate that for a brief time at the start of the year some teaching in mathematics was inadequate having previously been good. This has been quickly addressed, although some teaching still requires improvement.
- A small minority of parents who responded to the academy survey or emailed inspectors had well-founded concerns about the previous provision in mathematics.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The behaviour of students is good. They behave well in lessons and around the academy. They are polite and courteous and considerate towards others. They work well together in lessons and have good relationships with the adults who work with them. They enjoy their learning and have high expectations of themselves.
- The number of exclusions has fallen rapidly since the first year the academy opened. Where there are reported incidents, swift and effective action is taken by senior leaders. Repeat offences are exceptionally rare. Students feel confident that if they report an incident it will be dealt with well by senior leaders.
- Students have a very strong sense of right and wrong. They have a wide understanding of diversity within the United Kingdom and, through a wide range of trips and meeting visitors to the academy, a good understanding of the wider world. They have numerous opportunities to take responsibilities, such as looking after the animals.
- The large majority of parents who responded to the academy survey agreed that behaviour is managed well in the academy.

- In almost all lessons, including those few that require improvement, students remain engaged and enthusiastic about their learning although at times a few allow their minds to wander and they become inattentive. Occasionally, they are slow to respond to teachers' prompts and questions. No disruptive behaviour was seen during the inspection.
- Attendance is improving and is currently above the national average. Attendance clinics are held where there are concerns, including for those supported by the pupil premium.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. The extent to which students feel safe is also good. This is confirmed in the formal and informal discussions with students. The site is secure and the only criticism students had was that, if anything, it was too confining.
- Students know how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations and are acutely aware of the dangers of cyber bullying as well as other types of bullying linked to racism and homophobia. There are few such incidents reported.
- All parents who responded to the academy survey agreed that the academy keeps their children safe.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The Principal and Assistant Principal lead the academy by example, setting out a clear vision for its future success. They are determined that standards should be as high as possible while, at the same time, providing their students with a well-rounded education. Targets set for students are challenging. Responses from the staff survey indicate that staff fully support senior leaders in the direction they are leading the academy.
- Leaders' judgements of the strengths and weaknesses of the academy are accurate. Where weaknesses have been identified. For example, previously in mathematics, they have taken firm and swift action to bring about improvements in teaching. Elsewhere through regular checking, training and support there have also been improvements in teaching, leading to examples of teaching becoming outstanding.
- Senior leaders track students' progress regularly and thoroughly and analyse trends by groups as well as by individual student. Support is introduced quickly if a student is identified as falling behind. The achievement of students eligible for free school meals is also closely checked. The pupil premium is used effectively to provide additional support, for example, through Easter revision courses and additional resources, in order to close the gap in achievement, especially in Year 10.
- Arrangements for performance management of teachers are rigorous to ensure there is a close match between pay and teachers' performance. In joint lesson observations with senior leaders and inspectors, there was a close match in judgements. Teachers are held to account through regular checking of students' work and achievement.
- Students are highly positive about the guidance they receive through dedicated weekly careers sessions. Students receive a programme of trips and visitors that include local businesses and universities. Most are clear about their next steps in education.

- The curriculum matches the aspirations of students well and reflects the large farming community in the area. It has good balance of academic and land-based vocational routes. There is a wide range of rural-based extra-curricular activities involving working with animals and enrichment activities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Additional interventions are not always accurately matched to the needs of all the learners in the group. Although the time allocated for formal physical education lessons is limited, this is compensated for through physical land-based activities and the provision of sports clubs.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through thematic assemblies, where there are opportunities to reflect and show concern for humans and animals. The rural setting and range of livestock enable students to appreciate the beauty of nature.
- The academy regularly surveys the views of parents and takes account of any concerns they raise. All parents who responded to the academy survey agreed that the academy is led well. Parents are particularly positive about the quality of care and support their children receive, particularly for disabled students and those who have special educational needs.
- All safeguarding arrangements are met and checks are carried out thoroughly. All policies and required procedures are in place to ensure students' health and safety.
- Due to the small size of the academy, almost all of the leadership responsibility falls on the shoulders on the academy's senior leaders. There are no subject leaders or other middle leaders. However senior leaders are planning to build capacity to improve further by extending leadership opportunities, for example, in English and in the sixth form due to open in September 2014.
- There has been some external verification of the work of the academy but, to date, this has been limited.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body provides a good balance of support and challenge to the academy's senior leaders. Governors are highly aspirational in seeking to achieve standards in line with the national average in the academy's first set of GCSE examination results.
  - Achievement of students is checked closely through the work of the performance committee and through regular governor visits to the academy.
  - Governors know strengths and weaknesses in the academy well, including teaching, and have robust performance management procedures in place.
  - Governors make sure that safeguarding procedures are as rigorous as they can be and check the academy is meeting all its statutory responsibilities.
  - They ensure that the academy is making good use of its resources and in partnership with its main sponsor, South Staffordshire College, which has supported the academy financially as it is undersubscribed.
  - They are aware how the pupil premium is spent and are asking searching questions about how eligible students achieve, but recognise there is further to do in assessing its impact.
  - There are no literacy or numeracy link governors in place at present.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138351
<b>Local authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	426894

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy free school
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	14–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	83
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Graham Morley
<b>Principal</b>	Lorraine Makin
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	N/A
<b>Telephone number</b>	01785 333360
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