

Ravens Academy

Nayland Drive, Clacton-on-Sea, CO16 8TZ

Inspection dates 14–15 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The Principal has provided outstanding leadership since taking up her post when the school became an academy.
- Outstanding leadership is also evident in the work of the Vice-Principal, other senior leaders, the governing body and the Trust.
- Leadership has focused successfully on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement, as well as providing a high level of support and care for pupils and many of their families.
- The academy is strongly focused on pupils' individual needs. Their behaviour is good and they have good attitudes towards learning. The academy ensures pupils are kept safe.
- Achievement is good because pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their different starting points.
- The teaching is good. Teachers build strong relationships with their pupils. These help keep them active and enthusiastic learners so they are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- The academy provides well for all pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- The curriculum contains an excellent range of creative topics which help pupils use their skills in different ways. Events, such as visits out or visitors to the academy, enrich pupils' experiences and extend their aspirations well.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong. As a result, they are well-prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The provision in the early years is good and supports children's learning effectively because of outstanding leadership.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are not as strong as their skills in literacy and numeracy.
- In subjects other than English and mathematics, pupils' work is not always neatly presented and teachers' marking is not consistently helpful.
- Leaders have not yet focused on ensuring consistently effective provision for the most-able pupils.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in 20 lessons or parts of lessons. A number of lessons were observed jointly with the Principal and the Vice-Principal.
- Meetings and discussions took place with the Principal, representatives of the Academy Transformation Trust, members of the governing body, staff, pupils and parents.
- Inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, some jointly with the English and mathematics leaders, and several pupils read to the inspectors.
- Too few parents used the online parent survey, Parent View, for it to be analysed. Inspectors took account of the 100 responses to the academy's own recent questionnaire. The inspectors also talked to parents and took account of the 22 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire completed by staff.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents produced by the academy, including data on pupils' progress and attainment, procedures for safeguarding, and the academy's own evaluations of its work. They considered reports to the governing body and minutes of their meetings, and the academy's action plans for raising attainment.

Inspection team

Geof Timms, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynn Lowery

Additional Inspector

Robert Bone

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ravens Academy is an average-sized primary school. The number of pupils on roll has risen rapidly since it became an academy.
- The predecessor school, called Ravenscroft Primary School, became a sponsor-led academy in September 2013 as part of the Academy Transformation Trust. When the predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged as inadequate.
- Children attend the early years provision in a Reception class and a mixed-aged Reception and Year 1 class on a full-time basis. Children attend the Nursery class on a part-time mornings-only basis.
- Since the academy was set up, there have been a significant number of staff changes including the Principal and Vice-Principal.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- A well above average proportion of pupils are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school runs a breakfast club each morning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the improvements made to the good quality of teaching and learning by making sure that all teachers:
 - promote the progress of the most-able pupils more consistently
 - plan enough opportunities to extend pupils' vocabulary and improve their speaking skills
 - make their marking more helpful to pupils
 - raise expectations of the presentation of pupils' work in subjects other than English and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Since becoming an academy sponsored by the Academy Transformation Trust, the leadership has been outstanding. The Principal is very effectively supported by senior leaders, the outstanding governing body and staff from the Trust. The improvements made to the academy have been based on leaders' robust and accurate estimation of the academy's effectiveness and their very detailed and effective plans for bringing about change.
- Leaders are strongly focused on the pupils' achievement and good behaviour, and on ensuring high quality teaching. However, alongside this, they provide pupils and many of their families with the high quality support and care they need due to the disadvantaged nature of many pupils' backgrounds. Because of this, the academy has made rapid improvements over the past two years in all aspects of its work.
- The leadership of teaching is outstanding. Leaders use effective systems for checking on teachers' performance, with advice and support provided if needed. All teachers and other staff, such as teaching assistants, benefit from appropriate extra training. Leaders have dealt with weaker teaching firmly and this, together with effective recruitment, has brought about rapid improvement.
- Leaders monitor the work of the academy through a wide range of activities. Regular meetings are held between the senior leaders and teachers to assess the progress of, and provision for, individual pupils. Appropriate support in a small group or on a one-to-one basis is put in place where needed. The academy is organised flexibly so that small groups of pupils with specific learning needs are able to work with qualified adults on a regular basis. This has had a positive impact on their good progress.
- Leadership is appropriately shared among staff. Those with responsibilities for subjects such as English and mathematics, or for other aspects of the academy's work, such as the provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, ensure that all staff work as a very strong and effective team for the benefit of the pupils.
- The Trust provides excellent support and challenge for the academy. Training is provided and opportunities to meet teachers or governors from other academies in the Trust are promoted well so that expertise and good practice can be shared. In addition, the academy has kept a good relationship with the local authority and this ensures they have access to useful local knowledge and expertise.
- The academy ensures pupils are well-prepared for life in modern Britain through their work to instil British values. Pupils learn about democracy, tolerance and respect through the well-planned curriculum, which is broad and balanced. Links are made between subjects so pupils can use their skills in different ways. For example, older pupils extended their science work when learning about light by studying the work of Impressionist artists.
- The academy extends pupils' horizons through a wide range of activities, such as outdoor residential experiences and learning about different faiths and cultural differences. The academy ensures pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Staff promote equality of opportunity well. This ensures good relations are fostered and there is no discrimination.
- Additional funding for the high proportion of disadvantaged pupils is used well to support their learning. Leaders plan and track this funding and its impact. Data show that, because of the good provision, these pupils often achieve at least as well as their classmates.
- The extra funding provided for sporting activities is used to provide a good range of opportunities. Coaches are employed for some specialist teaching and to help provide class teachers with extra training. Pupils are able to access a wider range of sports and because of this the participation in sporting activities has risen.
- Together with leaders, governors ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met and the academy's related procedures are effective.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governance is outstanding and provides the academy with very effective levels of support and challenge. This has had a positive impact on the recent rapid improvement. The governing body holds the academy leaders to account for achievement and the quality of teaching. They have a clear understanding of the data on pupils' progress and the quality of teaching at the academy.
- Governors visit the academy regularly and know its strengths and weaknesses well. They carry out their statutory duties effectively. They are fully involved in decisions about teachers' pay and understand well how this is linked to performance and responsibilities in order to improve teaching. Governors are fully supportive of the headteacher when actions to tackle any underperformance are required.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This view is supported by the parents spoken to and by all of those who completed the most recent academy questionnaire. Pupils all say they enjoy coming to the academy and they talk positively about various aspects of school life. They talked about how they enjoy lessons with practical activities, such as carrying out science experiments, but also about the teachers and other staff. One pupil said, 'They are always so nice – really friendly.'
- Pupils told the inspectors they enjoyed using technology and especially the new three-dimensional facility. They like the way the academy rewards effort and good behaviour. Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good. They respond positively when given targets and to the feedback they are given by teachers in marking, using the 'yellow time' to respond to comments. However, while their work in English and mathematics is carefully and neatly presented, this is not always the case in other subjects.
- Pupils show respect for the academy's surroundings and resources, and do not drop litter. Pupils' response to the academy's expectations of their behaviour and social development is good. They enjoy the opportunities to take responsibility within the academy through activities such as the school council, looking after the younger children or being library monitors.
- The vast majority of the pupils behave well in lessons. It is rare for learning to be slowed because of poor behaviour. When moving around the academy, in assemblies or at lunch times and playtimes, pupils are well behaved and play together sensibly. They are friendly and pleasant to talk to.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Almost all of the parents who responded to the academy's questionnaire said their children enjoy school, are safe and well looked after. Staff put a high priority on ensuring pupils' safety. On educational visits, leaders assess the potential risks appropriately. Supervision is good at break and lunch times.
- Pupils have good attitudes to keeping themselves safe. They are aware of a range of risks, such as those they may come across while using new technology. They have a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using computers or other devices.
- Pupils say there is little bullying at the academy. They understand what constitutes bullying and how to deal with it. Those spoken to by the inspectors were confident that there are a lot of adults in the academy they can trust, and to whom they would talk to if they had any worries.
- The work of the family liaison staff has a very positive impact on the vulnerable pupils and families they work with. This helps support better attendance and pupils' readiness for school. The breakfast club provides pupils with a calm and productive start to the day.
- Attendance is below average but the academy does all it can to promote and encourage full attendance. The school has a few persistent absentees but most parents ensure their children attend school regularly and are punctual.

The quality of teaching is good

- Since her appointment, the outstanding leadership of the Principal, supported by senior leaders, the Trust and the governing body, has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching. Teachers have been expected to improve the progress pupils make and they have responded to this positively. Teachers and teaching assistants form a strong team. The academy staff have created a caring ethos and this has a very positive impact on the pupils' progress as many of them face significant difficulties. All adults know the pupils well as individuals and provide good support for their learning and for their differing needs.
- The academy has updated its systems for assessing and recording pupils' learning and progress in line with recent changes in the National Curriculum regarding the use of levels. Teachers and leaders are very knowledgeable about the progress made by individual pupils and use this to provide them with activities which are mostly at an appropriate level. At times, teachers do not ensure the tasks are sufficiently challenging for the most-able pupils.
- Teachers plan activities that take advantage of the natural links between subjects and this helps to develop pupils' skills in a variety of ways. Pupils learn about different cultures through some topic themes within the curriculum. In some lessons, there are missed opportunities to improve pupils' vocabulary and to give them enough opportunities to improve their speaking skills.
- The teaching of reading is good and the staff ensure pupils enjoy books. Teachers and teaching assistants have a good understanding of how to teach phonic skills (how letters combine to make different sounds), and pupils build on these skills well to make good progress.
- The teaching of writing is good. Pupils are taught good basic handwriting skills, although these are not always used well in other subjects. The content of their writing is good.
- The teaching of mathematics has improved this year due to the introduction of a new programme of work and a more detailed focus on practical skills and problem solving. This enables pupils to use their skills in situations that they are likely to come across in real life.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide very good support for the high proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs on a one-to-one basis and in classes. This means that the pupils are able to take a full and active part in academy life and make good progress.
- The marking of pupils' work has improved recently in English and mathematics. It now makes clear what pupils have done well and what they need to do to improve. Pupils talk about how teachers' marking and use of targets help them learn. Time is provided at the start of the day or the start of lessons for pupils to refer to comments and next steps so that they improve their work. The marking in subjects other than English and mathematics is not as effective at helping pupils know what they need to do to improve their work.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The achievement of pupils is good because of the improvements made to the quality of teaching and learning since the academy opened. The progress made in Key Stage 2 by the pupils who left at the end of 2014 was broadly in line with that expected in reading and mathematics, and significantly above that expected in writing. The progress currently made by pupils throughout the school, and especially by the end of Year 6 in 2015, has improved on this good start.
- Recent improvements to the teaching and learning of reading, writing and mathematics are having a positive impact throughout the school. However, pupils' vocabulary remains underdeveloped and their speaking skills are below those expected.
- The academy's data, supported by evidence from work in pupils' books, show that more pupils are making at least the progress they should from their different starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. The pupils in Year 6 are on track to attain standards that are above the 2014 national averages for all three

subjects. This represents very strong progress from their different starting points. The academy has improved the proportion of pupils reaching higher than expected standards in Year 6, although this remains below the national average and is inconsistent in different year groups.

- In 2014, standards for the pupils in Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics were significantly below average. This has improved this year. Standards in the current Year 2 are close to the national average in reading and writing, and above average in mathematics. This reflects the rapid improvements made in the academy. Current progress in Year 2 is good, as seen in books and the academy's data. This is due to effective teaching and the progress made from the often very low levels of skills and knowledge when children start school. Even so, too few pupils in Year 2 reach the higher levels.
- The latest results of the Year 1 check on pupils' skills in phonics are below the national average but have significantly improved on 2014. This is good progress in relation to their starting points, especially in regard to their reading skills. Pupils' basic reading skills have improved over the past two years and most of them develop a good level of interest in a range of books.
- Progress in mathematics is improving rapidly throughout the academy because teaching has improved through knowledgeable and effective leadership. A new scheme of work and changes made to the curriculum have had a very positive impact on pupils' learning. Many pupils achieve well in other subjects, such as art and design, science and history.
- Throughout the academy, the progress of the most-able pupils requires improvement because they are not always provided with sufficiently challenging activities. This is because leaders made improving the provision for disadvantaged pupils and those who faced significant difficulties in their learning a priority, so that standards for these groups of pupils have risen rapidly.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make progress similar to their peers so their achievement is good. The academy meets their needs well. For example, in Year 6 these pupils have achieved levels that are slightly better than that of their classmates in reading, and close to them in writing and mathematics, due to the effective support they are receiving.
- In 2014, the gap between the attainment of the disadvantaged pupils and others in Year 6 showed they were half a term behind their peers in mathematics and reading, and half a term above their peers in writing. In reading and mathematics, they were over a year behind other pupils nationally and a term behind them in writing. The current data show that the gap this year has not only narrowed but that the disadvantaged pupils have also reached higher standards than their classmates. This is due to the good support currently provided for them in classes and in small groups, when appropriate.

The early years provision

is good

- Outstanding leadership has ensured that the quality of the provision for the children in the early years is good. This has a positive impact on children's learning and progress. Rapid improvements have been made over the last two years and the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception year has increased. Children join the academy, in the Nursery and in the Reception classes, with levels of development that are often below those typically found for their age. This is especially the case in aspects of their social and emotional development and in their communication skills.
- Teaching is consistently good, with particular strengths in the Nursery. Because of this, children develop into very effective learners and are well prepared to start in Year 1. Children's progress is improving. In 2014, although there was good progress, many remained weaker in reading, writing and in their understanding of the world. Currently, pupils have weaker communication skills, especially in their speaking and in the breadth of their vocabulary.
- Teaching staff base their detailed planning strongly around the expected areas of learning and the key questions adults need to ask to extend children's learning. They use a wide range of activities to engage children's interest and enthusiasm. For example, in the Nursery children created a very imaginative sculpture of a bear using a range of everyday objects.

- Teaching staff record assessments of children’s learning regularly and their observations result in detailed written comments on children’s learning. This helps inform adults, including parents, about how well children are learning. Early assessments made at the start of the year enable staff to provide appropriate activities to meet children’s needs.

- Children behave well and enjoy working and playing with their friends. They tidy up rapidly at the end of sessions and talk enthusiastically about various activities, such as the bear hunt. Children enjoy looking at books and sharing them with adults. Teaching staff ensure they are kept safe.

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	139641
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	450107

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	271
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rod Lane
Principal	Karen Hammond
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
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