

Reedswood E-ACT Primary Academy

Bentley Drive, Walsall WS2 8RX

Inspection dates	24–25 May 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal and other senior leaders have ensured significant improvements since the last inspection. They have set high expectations for all members of the school community and as a result teaching has improved and is now good.
- Pupils now make good progress, often from low starting points, in reading, writing and mathematics. They enjoy their learning and appreciate what the school offers them.
- Pupils who are disadvantaged, have English as an additional language or who have special educational needs or disability all make good progress due to carefully planned interventions and support that are well matched to their individual needs.
- Parents value the work the school does with their children and recognise and appreciate the improvements that the principal has brought about since her appointment.
- Pupils show positive attitudes towards learning. They behave well and show consideration and care for each other. They understand and demonstrate the school's values of promoting respect for self, others and the environment.
- The school's work to ensure pupils' safety and well-being is a strength of the school. There are extremely thorough safeguarding procedures in place that are understood and followed conscientiously by all staff.
- Children make a positive start in the early years due to good teaching and exciting learning opportunities.
- The academy sponsor's raising achievement board, well supported by the academy ambassadorial advisory group, provides strong and effective governance and an appropriate balance of support and challenge.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always make sure that pupils take sufficient care with spelling, handwriting and writing numbers.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge in other curriculum areas.
- Not all middle leaders rigorously hold other teachers to account for pupil outcomes within their areas of responsibility.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is outstanding and further raise pupils' outcomes in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that teachers insist on accuracy from pupils in spelling, presentation of handwriting and formation of numerals
 - providing further opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge and skills in other areas of the curriculum.
- Build on the highly effective senior leadership that now exists within the school by ensuring that leaders at all levels hold teachers within their areas of responsibility to account for pupils' progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since her appointment in January 2015, the principal has provided extremely strong and incisive leadership. She has set a clear vision for the school which is based on high expectations for all members of the school community. She has taken robust action to identify where leadership was previously less effective. This has led to the appointment of a new vice principal and assistant principal who share her values and commitment. They are now a highly effective senior leadership team and are uncompromising in their drive to ensure excellence in all aspects of school life. Their actions have led to improved outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders have used carefully planned and thorough monitoring and evaluation to identify where and how teaching needed to improve. They have supported teachers, through the provision of a wide range of training opportunities, both in school and at other schools, to enable them to learn from outstanding practice. Where teaching has not improved rapidly enough, the principal has taken strong action. As a result, teaching is now good across the school. Teachers and other staff appreciate the changes that have taken place. As one member of staff commented, 'I'm proud to work in a school where leadership is strong, supportive and encouraging, and to feel respected, valued and motivated.'
- Monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is used effectively to set clear, accurate and well-planned priorities for improvement. There are rigorous performance management systems in place that ensure strong links between the quality of teaching and pay progression. Experienced teachers are required to work alongside other colleagues to share outstanding practice.
- Higher-level teaching assistants are used very effectively to provide additional leadership strength in areas such as provision for pupils with special educational needs or disability, and assessment. They work effectively alongside other school leaders to provide advice and support and have helped in the rapid improvements that have taken place in these areas.
- The majority of middle leaders have taken up their posts very recently. They have been provided with regular opportunities to work alongside the principal and other senior leaders to develop their skills in monitoring and evaluating provision within their areas of responsibility. While this has helped them to get a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses, they are not yet fully effective in holding other members of staff to account for improving outcomes for pupils.
- The introduction of a new assessment system in school this year has played a significant part in helping teachers to understand how their pupils are achieving and to then amend planning as required. School leaders have worked with the academy sponsor to develop a system based on assessment without levels but have then refined it further to more accurately measure each pupil's progress. Assessment is closely matched to the curriculum and allows leaders to have a detailed understanding of the progress of both individuals and groups of pupils.
- Pupil premium funding is used very effectively to provide additional support for disadvantaged pupils to help narrow any gaps in learning. One-to-one support, small group sessions and specialist staff are all used to enable these pupils to make rapid progress. Leaders monitor their progress closely and compare it with that of other pupils in school and all pupils nationally.
- The school curriculum has been well planned to make sure it is broad and balanced but is also engaging and interesting for the pupils. Topics such as 'Turrets and Tiaras' and 'Back from the Future' are supported by termly visits to places such as Tamworth Castle or through visitors to school, including a hands-on science Mars lander workshop. All pupils benefit from teaching from a music specialist, with pupils in Year 3 all undertaking a grade 1 music exam. This typifies the high expectations that the school has for all its pupils.
- Leaders ensure that the additional sports funding is used to good effect. All pupils take part in a weekly swimming session, either in the school's own small training pool, led by a qualified coach, or at the nearby leisure pool. As a result, by the time they leave school in Year 6 the very large majority of pupils can swim at least a length. The school also employs a qualified sports coach, who teaches all classes each week and runs, together with other members of staff, lunchtime and after-school clubs, including multi-sports, football and netball. Pupils are justifiably proud of their sporting achievements in a range of local competitions, including winning the girls' cricket championship.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported extremely well both through direct teaching as part of the curriculum, and through assemblies. Pupils are provided with good opportunities to take part in a range of activities, such as steel drumming and singing, and develop empathy about the

beliefs of others through visits to places of worship. They learn about and have a good appreciation of fundamental British values such as tolerance, democracy and respect. An example of this was seen in the letters they wrote to an MP to debate the EU referendum. This showed their understanding of how politicians could bring about change.

■ **The governance of the school**

- The academy sponsors fulfil their governance requirements efficiently through a raising achievement board that meets every six weeks and a local ambassadorial advisory group that has direct and regular involvement with the principal. Members of the raising achievement board use their educational knowledge to closely monitor the impact of teaching upon learning and are informed by a regional educational director who makes regular visits to the school, and a local authority representative. This helps to ensure that governors have a detailed understanding of the quality of teaching and can offer strong levels of challenge and support.
- The academy trust recognised after the last inspection that pupils were not achieving sufficiently high outcomes and that teaching across the school was not good enough. They ensured that they subsequently appointed strong leaders, including the principal, and have monitored their work closely. They use the range of information available to them well to compare the performance of the school with others, both locally and nationally.
- The raising achievement board has a good understanding of how different groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are achieving in school and they monitor the impact of the spending of any additional funding, including the pupil premium, closely. The recently established ambassadorial advisory group provides an effective vehicle for liaising with parents and the local community.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. This aspect of the school’s work is a real strength and is highly effective in ensuring that pupils are in a strong position to learn and feel secure. The systems for identifying vulnerable pupils are extremely thorough and make good use of outside agencies when appropriate. Record-keeping is exceptionally detailed and shows that the school goes the ‘extra mile’ any time that a pupil might be at risk. All staff are very well trained and are fully aware of their responsibilities.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Teachers establish productive relationships with pupils and set high expectations for them. They make learning relevant and interesting for the pupils. They effectively communicate to the pupils the purpose of their learning and ensure that they know what they are expected to achieve. This helps pupils to show positive attitudes towards their learning.
- Teachers demonstrate a strong awareness of the need to support pupils’ language development, especially those for whom English is an additional language. Teachers use questioning well to provide pupils with opportunities to answer in extended sentences and match the questions well to the abilities of the pupils within the class. For example, towards the end of a Year 6 mathematics lesson, the teacher created good opportunities for pupils to explain their learning. Pupils were able to articulately identify the methods they had used to solve problems on mean and averages, and to give a convincing account of the reasoning they had used to arrive at the answers.
- Learning support assistants are deployed very well in lessons and work in partnership with teachers to support identified pupils. They have a clear awareness of the specific needs of pupils, including those with special educational needs or disability and disadvantaged pupils. As a result, all pupils are able to undertake the work that is set for them, with staff providing guidance as required and not making the task too easy.
- The teaching of writing has improved and pupils are now provided with regular opportunities to write independently and at length. School leaders have ensured that there is now a common approach and focus on improving pupils’ use of grammar and punctuation in their writing. The impact of this is evident in written work that demonstrates complex vocabulary. Pupils are provided with very good opportunities to apply their writing skills in other subjects, such as science, history and geography. Evidence of this was seen in pupils’ written work connected to their history work on the Tudors where they wrote imaginatively about a child’s life in previous times.
- The teaching of reading is good. There is a whole-school approach to the teaching of reading, with children introduced to phonics (the sounds that letter make in words) when they are in Reception. They

develop good skills as they move into Year 1 in blending the sounds to make words and apply their knowledge to write the words in sentences. Teachers make reading interesting and encourage pupils to read regularly, both in school and at home. Pupils appreciate the opportunities to choose books from the recently updated, restocked library which offers a good range of books that appeal to pupils of all ages and abilities.

- The teaching of mathematics is effective, with pupils provided with regular opportunities to solve problems using calculations and reasoning. Activities are well adjusted to match the different abilities in classes. However, pupils are not given enough opportunities to use and apply their mathematical knowledge in other subjects and this limits their appreciation of how the subject can be of real value and importance in their lives.
- Marking and feedback is generally used effectively, with opportunities for pupils to reflect on the comments that teachers write in their books. Teachers give clear guidance on how pupils can improve their work and identify next steps in learning. However, teachers do not always set sufficiently high expectations of the presentation of pupils' written and mathematical work and this results in untidy handwriting and errors in the formation of numbers. Basic spelling mistakes are not always identified and this slows the pace of learning in this area of written work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are considerate and caring and take tremendous pride in their school. They are appreciative of the opportunities they are provided with to take on responsibility, such as involvement in the school council or as members of the pupil leadership team.
- Pupils' views are valued by school leaders. An example of this is the pupil self-evaluation initiative, where pupils contribute ideas that are then incorporated into the whole-school improvement plan. Pupils were involved in formulating the school vision, which is displayed throughout the school. Year 6 pupils were extremely keen to speak to inspectors during the inspection and exemplified through their comments one of the vision statements of 'celebrating each individual as a unique personality'.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. They know that if they have a problem there is someone in school that they can talk to who will sort it out. Parents were also confident that their children are safe in school.
- Pupils say there is little bullying in school. They understand the different types of bullying, including cyber bullying, and recognise the negative and distressing impact that unkind words or actions can have on others. They understand the risks that can be associated with using the internet.
- School leaders have taken strong action to improve attendance. They have made parents aware of the impact that taking their children out of school for any length of time can have on their learning and have taken action against parents if they take unauthorised holidays during term time. They make good use of an educational welfare officer to work with families. While these measures have brought about an improvement in attendance, there is still a small number of parents who do not ensure that their children attend regularly or on time.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils have a clear understanding of the school's expectations of everyone showing respect, kindness and consideration in their behaviour, and this is reflected in the calm and supportive atmosphere that pervades the school. The thorough and detailed behaviour records that leaders keep indicate that there is little inappropriate behaviour and that when it does occur it is dealt with quickly and effectively.
- All staff apply the school's behaviour policy fairly and consistently. Pupils know that when anyone does not behave in the appropriate way, there are sanctions that will be applied. They are all keen to receive the 'cloud' awards that are given out in the weekly achievement assemblies to celebrate positive behaviour. Pupils, staff and parents believe that behaviour is good and that the actions that school leaders have taken have further strengthened the good behaviour that was seen at the last inspection.
- Pupils show positive attitudes to learning that allow lessons to proceed without disruption. They make good use of the range of play apparatus that the school council has been involved in choosing at breaktime and lunchtime and play together well. Older pupils enjoy the responsibility of looking after younger children from the Reception classes.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- School records and evidence gathered during the inspection, including observations in lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work, indicate that most pupils are making good progress from their starting points, which are often well below those expected for their age. The majority of pupils in all classes are on track to reach the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. This is an improvement on previous years and is as a result of the good teaching that is now in place, and effective individual support that helps any pupils who need to catch up.
- In 2015, outcomes across the school were variable. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected level in the Year 1 phonics check was above the national average. Pupils in Year 2 attained standards that were broadly in line with national averages in reading and mathematics but below average in writing. The most able pupils in Year 2 were below national averages in reading.
- National assessment information from 2015 for pupils in Year 6 showed that pupils were below the expected standards in reading, mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling. However, the proportion of pupils making at least expected progress from key stage 1 was at least in line with national averages in both reading and mathematics and above the national average in writing. A far higher proportion of pupils who are currently in school are now working at or above the expected standards for their age.
- Disadvantaged pupils across the school make progress that is now at least in line with their classmates and that compares well with pupils nationally. Any gaps in their attainment are now closing rapidly and in some years their outcomes are better than those of the other pupils. This is because the school makes highly effective use of the pupil premium funding to accurately match additional support to each pupil's specific needs.
- The most able pupils in school are making stronger progress this year and their outcomes are improving. School leaders have ensured that there is a significantly higher level of challenge for these pupils and have provided stimulating additional learning activities that engage their interest and require them to think deeply. These have included termly writing workshops at historical and scientific locations, including Kenilworth Castle, that allow the pupils to work alongside pupils of similar abilities from other schools.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability learn very well and make good progress. A higher-level teaching assistant, working alongside other school leaders, provides highly effective support for the pupils and helps to plan interventions that are then delivered in the classrooms. School leaders have used external expertise to help develop a referral system that ensures that pupils' specific needs are identified and met as early as possible.
- The high proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress and achieve well. Where necessary, additional language support is provided and teachers in classes are very conscious of the need to plan for opportunities for these pupils to develop their spoken language. By the end of Year 6, they achieve as well as their classmates.
- While pupils' outcomes in punctuation and grammar have improved, they still do not achieve as well in spelling and handwriting. This is because mistakes are not always accurately identified and corrected soon enough by teachers.

Early years provision

is good

- Children settle quickly and happily into school life in the early years. Staff across both Nursery and Reception make learning fun and help to develop children's confidence and social skills.
- A high proportion of children start in school with skills and knowledge that are well below those that are typical for their age. As a result of good teaching, they make good progress in all areas of learning. In 2015, by the time they reached the end of the Reception Year the proportion who had achieved a good level of development was below the national average. However, from their starting points, this represented good progress. School assessment information and evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that this year a higher proportion will have reached a good level of development.
- Leadership of the early years is good. The leader, although only having been in the post for a relatively short period of time, has an accurate and comprehensive view of the strengths and areas of development within the provision. Staff have benefited from training, both in school and at other schools with outstanding early years provision.

- Teaching is good in both Nursery and Reception. Teachers and other staff plan a wide range of activities that engage children's interest and allow them to apply their developing skills. An example of this, seen during the inspection, was where groups of children, dressed as magicians, worked with the teacher to make potions and spells. They then used their phonics knowledge to write independent sentences such as 'The witch is making a potion'.
- All areas of learning are well provided for. Children make sensible choices about the activities they involve themselves in, both in the well-resourced and attractive indoor and outdoor classrooms. They also benefit from weekly visits to the forest school area where their curiosity and investigative skills are further developed.
- Disadvantaged children, those with special educational needs or disability, and children who speak English as an additional language all make good progress. This is because staff accurately identify their needs and provide additional support, including specialist teaching assistants who are able to speak to children in their own language where this is necessary.
- Children behave well and form strong relationships. They understand the need to take turns and to cooperate with each other. They are keen to talk to each other and to adults.
- Arrangements to ensure children's safeguarding and welfare needs are exceptionally strong. Staff are well trained and, as a result, children feel secure and well cared for.
- Parents are involved as valued partners in their children's education. Teachers use parents' contributions as part of initial assessments to gain a full view of each child's capabilities and needs. Parents say they are very well informed about how their child is doing in school. Regular opportunities are created for parents to come into school to see what children are learning. During the inspection, parents who were in school attending a reading workshop commented very positively about how the school supports both them and their children.

School details

Unique reference number	138452
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10009288

This inspection 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	452
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair	Michael Wemms
Principal/Teacher in charge	Maxine Lathbury-Cox
Telephone number	01922 721323
Website	www.reedswoodacademy.co.uk
Email address	postbox@reedswoode-actacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	29–30 January 2014

Information about this school

- Reedswood E-ACT Primary Academy is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those who are supported by the pupil premium funding, is above average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is much higher than average. The largest ethnic group represented is Pakistani. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also much higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics for pupils in Year 6.
- The principal took up her post in January 2015. The vice principal and assistant principal have also been appointed since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in 24 lessons or parts of lessons.
- The inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read. They met with a group of pupils, including members of the school council, to gain their views of the school. The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime, lunchtime and at the end of the school day, as well as in lessons. They attended an assembly.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including assessments and records of pupils' progress, the school's checks and records relating to safeguarding, child protection and attendance, records of how teaching is managed and the school improvement plans.
- Meetings were held with the principal, vice principal, assistant principal and four middle leaders. The lead inspector met with a representative of the academy sponsor's raising achievement board and two members of the academy ambassadorial advisory group. He also met with the academy sponsor's director of quality assurance.
- The inspectors took account of the 32 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and considered free-text responses from two parents. They also considered the responses to the academy's recent parental survey and talked to parents at the start and end of the school day. They also looked at the 23 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Adam Hewett, lead inspector

Mel Ford

Michael Appleby

Her Majesty's Inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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