

# Rushden Academy

Hayway, Rushden NN10 6AG

## Inspection dates

6–7 July 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Inadequate**

|  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   | Inadequate           |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Inadequate           |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare  | Inadequate           |
| Outcomes for pupils                          | Inadequate           |
| 16 to 19 study programmes                    | Good                 |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Requires improvement |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- Successive cohorts of pupils have underachieved at this school.
- The school continues to be affected negatively by leadership and staffing changes.
- Outcomes for pupils remain well below national averages at key stage 4. As a result, pupils are not well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Leaders have not acted swiftly enough to halt the decline in pupils' achievement since the previous inspection. While outcomes in English and science are now improving, pupils continue to underachieve in mathematics.
- The school's least able pupils have not received the support they need to make good progress. As a result, they have been caught in a vicious circle of underachievement.
- Teachers do not consistently use information from assessments to plan work that is at the right level for pupils, or provide effective support.
- The teaching of mathematics at key stage 3 does not prepare pupils for GCSE. Pupils do not have opportunities to practise numeracy skills in different subjects.
- In classes that are taught by supply teachers, behaviour is poor. Not all teachers challenge instances of disrespectful behaviour and language in class.
- Not all pupils have confidence in the school's systems to respond to and reduce bullying.
- Pupils' attendance is well below national averages, and has fallen this year. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school has risen.
- The curriculum has not enabled pupils to make the progress of which they are capable. Pupils who are on part-time timetables do not currently receive an adequate education.

### The school has the following strengths

- Since his appointment in September 2015, the principal has brought stability and a determination to improve standards. The changes he has made are beginning to bring about some improvements.
- Middle leaders have enhanced their understanding of their role in improving the school, and are beginning to have a beneficial impact.
- The sixth form is good. Good teaching on post-16 courses means that students have positive attitudes to their learning and make good progress. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is appropriate to their needs.
- Improved routines and staff supervision have led to better behaviour at break and lunchtime.

## Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

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

- Urgently improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and reduce the inconsistencies in teaching by:
  - reducing the number of supply teachers in the school
  - improving the support for the least able pupils, so that their progress accelerates
  - ensuring that all teachers provide feedback in line with the school's policy
  - ensuring that teaching in mathematics enables all pupils to develop skills of mastery and reasoning, so that they are better prepared for the next stage of their mathematics education
  - increasing opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills in different subjects.
  
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
  - working with pupils to develop improved systems to address and reduce bullying in the school
  - working with leaders from the trust to improve pupils' attendance at school and reduce persistent absence
  - making sure that all teachers use the new behaviour system consistently across the school so that low-level disruption is eradicated and that all instances of disrespectful language and behaviour are consistently challenged
  - ensuring that all teachers insist on high standards of presentation of pupils' work.
  
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that the new assessment system is consistently applied in all subjects
  - ensuring that the new arrangements for pupils on part-time and alternative provision are effective in improving their attendance and progress
  - increasing opportunities for teachers to develop their practice by learning from expertise in the school, the trust and elsewhere.
  
- Improve the sixth form by:
  - increasing opportunities for all students to take part in work-related learning.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- For too long, pupils have been poorly served by inadequate teaching and unstable leadership. While this is now an improving situation, it has meant that successive cohorts of pupils have consistently underachieved.
- Leaders, including governors, have, since the previous inspection, not acted swiftly enough to halt the steady decline in pupil outcomes. Leaders from the school's sponsor, the Education Fellowship Trust, and governors did not challenge previous leaders' inaccurate predictions for pupils' performance at key stage 4. As a result, pupils' progress across a range of subjects was inadequate.
- Instability in staffing and constant changes of teachers for pupils have continued to affect current pupils. Pupils say that many of their lessons are taught by supply teachers who are not effective in ensuring that high expectations and good behaviour are the norm.
- Leaders have allowed a culture of low expectations to develop across the school. This is particularly true in lower ability sets, where leaders have not routinely ensured that good teaching is the norm. Not enough is expected of the school's least able pupils.
- Until recently, the curriculum was not fit for purpose. Pupils have followed courses that did not reflect their prior attainment or meet their needs. This has contributed to their continued underachievement. Pupils who are on part-time courses do not receive an adequate education.
- Leaders have not been effective in their use and monitoring of the additional funding provided for disadvantaged pupils. There are large gaps in the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils compared to other pupils in the school and the gaps are not closing.
- Year 7 catch-up funding has not been well used to support pupils who begin the school with very low prior attainment. As a result, these pupils have continued to struggle as they have moved through the school.
- Leaders have not been effective in improving pupils' attendance at school. They have accepted too readily the difficulties in ensuring that pupils attend well, and have not done enough to challenge and overcome these difficulties.
- Despite these failings, the school shows signs of improvement. Leaders from the trust are now providing better support to the school. Following last year's poor results, they made difficult but necessary changes to leadership that are now leading to improvements. The appointment of the current principal is a promising move. Trust leaders have provided effective support to the principal through a difficult and turbulent time.
- After his appointment in September 2015, the principal quickly understood what was needed and set about making radical changes. He has brought much-needed stability, positivity and a determination to improve standards. He has a clear strategic vision for the future direction of the school and has drawn up detailed plans for its improvement.
- These plans are beginning to bear fruit. The restructuring of the senior leadership team and the appointment of new senior leaders are leading to improvements. New leaders who have joined the school midway through the year are beginning to have an impact on improving outcomes. For example, much-improved leadership of science has led to better teaching and improved rates of progress in this subject.
- Current leaders recognised that the curriculum was not fit for purpose and immediately set about redesigning it. The new curriculum is much more appropriate to pupils' needs, and includes more appropriate plans for pupils who do not access full-time education.
- The programme of extra-curricular activities is a particular strength. Pupils spoke highly of the many sporting opportunities they have, and of the quality of their physical education.
- The principal has made difficult decisions regarding staff that have resulted in significant numbers of teachers leaving the school. However, for the first time in some years, the school will be almost fully staffed in September.
- Staff, parents and pupils have confidence in the current leadership to bring about the necessary changes, because they can see the improvements that are now being made.
- Current leaders have reviewed the school's provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and have made improvements as a result. Leaders recognised that the use of teaching assistants was not consistently effective and have taken steps to address this. They have provided training to staff in supporting these pupils more effectively in class. It is too soon to judge the full impact

of these actions.

- Middle leaders are now more positive about improving the school, because they are clear about leaders' expectations of them. They have begun their own processes of quality assurance and this is leading to improvements. They describe a 'developing culture of collective planning and sharing best practice' that is motivating teachers to want to do better. The use of the 'teacher toolkit' is ensuring that current staff are clearer about leaders' expectations of them.
- The school provides adequately for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. The programme of personal, social, health and economic education is suitably broad and covers a range of issues relating to pupils' sense of identity and community. The school champions rights for lesbian, gay and bisexual people, for example through prominent posters displayed around school.
- Newly qualified teachers may be appointed. The school has effective links with a local teacher training partnership which this year has successfully supported new teachers at the school. These teachers are part of a growing body of effective practitioners.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governors have not ensured that the additional funding provided for disadvantaged pupils has been spent effectively to help these pupils make progress in line with other pupils.
  - They did not ensure that performance management arrangements were sufficiently robust, or that teachers were set challenging targets for improvement. This has allowed poor teaching to go unchallenged for too long.
  - Previously unclear communication between governors and leaders from the trust meant that neither was effective in holding school leaders to account. The appointment of a new education director at the trust has improved communication with governors, who now have a clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Despite their past weaknesses, governors are knowledgeable and skilled. The review process, through which they are held to account by the trust's leaders, has led to governors now using these skills to challenge leaders more effectively.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All statutory safeguarding checks meet requirements. Procedures for recording, reporting and following up concerns about pupils are robust. Leaders are tenacious in following up referrals made to the local authority. They have good relationships with parents, and have led workshops for parents on a range of safeguarding issues, including self-harm. However, they do not always use these good relationships to encourage parents to engage with help early on, before problems escalate.
- Support for staff who deal with safeguarding issues is effective, because leaders recognise the importance of ensuring that all staff are able to carry out their safeguarding roles effectively.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the risks that pupils face and ensure that they address these concerns through the taught curriculum and through additional activities. For example, a talk by a visiting police officer on gang culture helped pupils to understand the risks more clearly.
- Leaders have made significant improvements to the school site in the past year. As a result, procedures for entering and leaving the school site are much more secure. Older pupils in particular appreciate how these changes have led to a safer school environment.
- Staff and governors all have up-to-date safeguarding training, including on female genital mutilation, radicalisation and extremism. The school has clear systems in place to check that pupils are safe and work closely with a range of outside agencies.
- The school's checks on the single central record meet requirements. Leaders ensure that appropriate risk assessments are in place for temporary staff, including those who work on the school site.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate**

- Currently, there are too many supply teachers in the school. Pupils who spoke with inspectors described the significant impact this has on the progress they are able to make. This has gone on for too long and has led to pupils' continued underachievement in a range of subjects. Pupils are rightly frustrated with the current arrangements.
- Not all teachers apply the school's behaviour policy consistently. This is particularly true in lessons taught by supply teachers. Disruption to learning in these classes means that pupils make very little progress. Observations by inspectors confirmed concerns expressed by parents, staff and pupils who said that behaviour in these lessons is not good enough and that it leads to a lack of learning and progress.

- The least able pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not receive adequate support in class. This means that they are sometimes not able to complete their work. At other times, teachers give them work that is below their ability level. As a result, they are ill-prepared for their next steps.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to develop their skills of mastery and reasoning in mathematics. Assessment in this subject does not reflect the expectations of the national curriculum at key stage 3. As a result, pupils are not well prepared for the challenges of GCSE mathematics.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills in other subjects. This is contributing to pupils' continued underachievement in mathematics at key stages 3 and 4.
- Not all teachers promote equality of opportunity in lessons. During the inspection, teachers did not always challenge disrespectful behaviour in class.
- The new assessment system is not equally well embedded across all subjects. As a result, teachers do not use information from assessment consistently well to plan appropriate learning.
- Not all teachers provide feedback in line with the school's policy. In some cases, the constant change of teachers means that pupils receive little feedback and do not know how well they are doing. Where feedback is most effective, it challenges pupils to think about why their responses are wrong, or how they could be improved. For example, in French, the teacher asked why the ending on the adjective was incorrect, and the pupil responded 'because the noun is feminine'.
- A number of pupils attend school on a part-time basis and complete work at home for part of the day. Some of this work comes from a software package that not all pupils are able to access. These arrangements are not adequate in ensuring that these pupils are learning well and making good progress.
- Where learning is most effective, teachers use their good subject knowledge and positive relationships with pupils to motivate them and ensure that learning meets their needs. This is especially true in upper ability sets, and in the sixth form.
- In physical education, the least able pupils make the same rate of progress as their peers. For example, in a session on physical fitness, pupils of lower ability were observed focusing and concentrating alongside their more able peers. The motivation and application of all pupils was consistently high as a result of the teacher's meticulous planning.
- Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good and leads to high levels of engagement. In a Year 12 drama lesson, for example, students clearly enjoyed working with and supporting each other. Their co-operation was evidence of their respect for each other and the teacher.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**is inadequate**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- The school's current systems to deal with bullying are not effective. Younger pupils in particular are worried about bullying, and do not have confidence in the school's approach to dealing with it. Leaders acknowledge that more work is needed to reduce bullying and to make sure that all pupils are confident that any incidents that do occur will be dealt with effectively.
- The school is not successful in ensuring that all pupils are confident and resilient learners. This is particularly true of the least able pupils, who lack confidence as a result of poor teaching and insufficient support. They give up too easily, and are then given easier work to do. They are caught in a vicious circle of underachievement as a result.
- Not all tutors ensure that tutor time is used well and that pupils make a consistently good start to the day. The new arrangements for tutor sessions have led to improvements in pupils' engagement and learning during these sessions. Teachers do not plan or deliver these sessions consistently well.
- Other aspects of pupils' personal development and welfare are promoted well. The school's provision for physical education (PE) is a strength of the school. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said how much they enjoy their PE sessions, as well as the extra-curricular opportunities they have in this subject. During the inspection, a group of pupils were observed leading a PE session with younger children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The enjoyment and maturity with which they led the session were evidence of how much these opportunities contribute to their own personal development.
- This year, the school has made better use of pupil premium funding to ensure that eligible pupils have

more opportunities to take part in the wider life of the school. This has included funding for some of them to take part in the school's successful Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

- Pupils who spoke with inspectors are confident about keeping safe in a range of situations, including online. The programme of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) is effective in ensuring that pupils have a good understanding of the risks and challenges they face in keeping safe.
- The school's programme of careers education has been effective in ensuring that all pupils, including the disadvantaged, have progressed to further education, training or employment. This year, the school has ensured that funding has been used to offer disadvantaged pupils personalised, intensive support. As a result of this advice, these pupils have been able to make sound decisions for their future.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Improved routines, and increased levels of staff supervision, have improved behaviour at break and lunchtimes. Inspectors' observations of pupils at these times showed that the vast majority behave safely and sensibly.
- Pupils who spoke with inspectors recognise the positive steps that the current principal has taken to improve behaviour, including introducing a new uniform. The vast majority of pupils now adhere to the stricter uniform policy. As one said, 'He is much stricter and that's better, because it makes you realise what real life is like.'
- Behaviour in lessons is inconsistent. In some lessons, pupils are not able to learn well because teachers do not challenge the poor behaviour of their classmates. This is particularly true in lower ability sets, and in classes taught by supply teachers.
- Pupils' attendance remains below the national average. Currently, one in five pupils is frequently absent from school. This figure has risen in the past year. Leaders have not taken prompt or effective action to reduce this.
- The proportion of pupils who are excluded from school remains above average and has risen this year. This is because some pupils have struggled to adapt to the new rules and expectations. There were no permanent exclusions in 2015/16.
- The school makes use of alternative provision for a small number of pupils, at Progress Schools and the Bridge. While staff make daily checks on their attendance, they do not do enough to ensure that the provision is meeting the pupils' needs and that they are engaged and attending well.
- Not all teachers ensure that pupils take pride in their work and present it neatly. Where pupils have had a succession of teachers, pupils' work is particularly scruffy.

## Outcomes for pupils

## are inadequate

- Too few pupils reach the standard that is expected of them by the end of key stage 4. For the past two years, the proportion who gain five GCSEs at grades A\* to C including in English and mathematics has been well below the national average. While rising this year, it is still predicted to be below last year's national average.
- Pupils' progress in a range of subjects, including in English and mathematics, has been well below average. While there are signs of improvement in English, science and other subjects, pupils continue to underachieve in mathematics at key stages 3 and 4. This means that pupils are unprepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- Progress from different starting points shows too much variation. The least able pupils, in particular, make slower rates of progress because they do not receive consistently effective support. There are signs of improvement in English, where improved support for these pupils has led to a rise in their reading ages. These pupils are now making progress in line with their peers. However, actions to improve the progress of the least able in mathematics have been less successful.
- Information provided by the school shows that there are significant gaps in the progress made by different groups of pupils in the school. Boys continue to lag behind girls in many areas of their learning.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupil premium funding has been effective in closing the gaps between the attainment and progress of these pupils, compared with others. Current leaders have addressed this, for example by providing a weekend revision programme for disadvantaged pupils in Year 11. While this led to some improvements, it was not enough to undo a long legacy of poor teaching. Across the school, the

progress of disadvantaged pupils remains variable. At key stage 5, they make progress in line with their peers. This is not the case at key stages 3 and 4. While gaps are reducing in English, they are not making the same progress as their peers in mathematics, or in other subjects.

- There is too much variation in the progress made in different subjects in the school. This directly relates to the quality of teaching in different subjects. While the variation is mostly due to the high volume of supply teachers in school, this is not always the case.
- Leaders have failed to offer appropriate support to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Consequently, they have not made enough progress from their starting points. While the provision for these pupils has now been revised, it is too soon to see the full impact of these actions.
- Pupils who attend provision elsewhere do not make consistently good progress, because they do not attend well. Leaders have recognised the need to review this provision to ensure that it better meets these pupils' needs.
- Pupils' books in English and science show positive signs of progress and improvement. This is because more stable teaching and better leadership of these subjects are ensuring that teachers have higher expectations for all pupils.

### 16 to 19 study programmes

### are good

- The sixth form is a significant strength in the school. Students in key stage 5 make much better progress than those at key stages 3 and 4. This is due to better teaching and a more appropriate curriculum. The programmes meet the interim minimum standards.
- Students in the sixth form learn as part of a well-established and well-organised consortium arrangement. This arrangement has been successful over a number of years in ensuring that students learn well and make good progress.
- The courses offered to students are well matched to their interests and abilities. As a result, almost all students who start a course go on to complete it successfully.
- Careers advice and guidance in the sixth form includes appropriate impartial advice from an external provider. It is effective in ensuring that students receive the advice they need to proceed to their next steps.
- In 2015, achievement on academic courses was above average in many subjects, and at least average in all subjects. On vocational courses, achievement is in line with national averages. Leaders have taken appropriate action in response to any gaps in achievement that have become evident in different subjects. As a result, leaders are predicting that achievement will rise this year. There are no significant differences in achievement for different groups of learners.
- Students who enter the sixth form without at least a grade C in English and mathematics improve their grades. The proportion who achieve a grade C in these subjects is roughly average.
- Attendance in the sixth form is high; very few pupils are absent from or late to school. This is because they value their learning and have positive attitudes to their courses. Students spoke positively of the 'sense of community' that they feel in the sixth form.
- Students in the sixth form feel safe, supported and respected. They told inspectors that they enjoy positive relationships with their teachers, and inspectors' observations of learning supported this view. For example, in an art lesson, students showed high levels of enjoyment and progress in their learning, as a result of mutually high expectations and well-planned teaching.
- Steps to increase security in the sixth form have been effective in improving students' safety. While they took some time to get used to the new arrangements, they appreciate that the use of security badges ensures that they and other pupils are now safer at the school.
- Students at the sixth form continue to a range of destinations post-16, including university, training and employment. Relatively few take up apprenticeships. Leaders recognise that there is more to do to widen the opportunities for work-based learning.

## School details

|                                |                  |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 139013           |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Northamptonshire |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 10009841         |

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

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| <b>Type of school</b>  | Secondary comprehensive  |
| <b>School category</b>                                       | Academy sponsor-led  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                                   | 11–18  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                                      | Mixed  |
| <b>Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes</b>         | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>                   | 761  |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes</b> | 96   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>                                 | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair</b>   | Alan Dodds   |
| <b>Principal</b>   | Jay Davenport  |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                                      | 01933 350391   |
| <b>Website</b>   | <a href="http://www.rushden-academy.net">www.rushden-academy.net</a> |
| <b>Email address</b>   | <a href="mailto:admin@rushden.net">admin@rushden.net</a>             |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>                           | 29–30 April 2014   |

## Information about this school

- This is an average-sized secondary school. It has been sponsored by the Education Fellowship Trust since January 2012.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. There are small numbers from other ethnic groups, and few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average.
- The principal was appointed in September 2015. He is the academy's third principal since the previous inspection.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A few pupils attend alternative provision at Progress Schools and the Bridge.
- The sixth form provision is part of the East Northamptonshire Consortium.
- The school's website complies with the necessary requirements.



## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 42 lessons. Some observations were carried out jointly with school leaders. Inspectors visited an assembly and observed learning and behaviour in tutorial sessions.
- Meetings were held with the principal, senior and middle leaders, three governors, including the chair, and representatives from the Education Fellowship Trust, including the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12. They spoke informally with other pupils at break and lunchtimes, and in lessons. One inspector listened to a group of Year 7 pupils reading.
- A range of documentation was considered, including the school's self-evaluation documents and improvement plans, quality assurance records, records of behaviour, bullying and attendance, safeguarding documentation, and information about the progress of all pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the 20 responses to Parent View, and the 49 responses to the staff questionnaire. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

## Inspection team

|                                 |                         |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Deirdre Duignan, Lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| John Edwards                    | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Sian Hampton                    | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Laurence Reilly                 | Ofsted Inspector        |

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