

# The Robert Smyth Academy

Burnmill Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire LE16 7JG

## Inspection dates

12–13 September 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The acting principal and other senior leaders are successfully leading improvements at the school.
- Pupils' attainment is above the national average in a range of different subjects. In some subjects, pupils' progress is rapid, but in a few their progress is slower. The most able pupils are making faster progress than they have done in previous years.
- Leaders provide disadvantaged pupils with valuable support. Disadvantaged pupils' progress has accelerated over the last year.
- Leaders have improved the quality of teaching since the last inspection. However, some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching have yet to be eliminated.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is effective. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. The majority of pupils behave well.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported. They make good progress.
- Pupils have access to a wide range of subjects and extra-curricular activities, which enrich their learning experience.
- Leaders have improved pupils' attendance. This is especially true for pupils who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress. In many subjects their progress and attainment are well above national averages.
- The governing body plays a vital role in school improvement. The information governors receive from senior leaders, however, does not provide enough detail to help them raise pupils' achievement further.
- Subject leaders support their teams effectively. Not all subject leaders are confident yet in measuring the effectiveness of their work.
- Senior leaders' improvement plans do not focus well enough on their self-evaluation. They do not measure how effective their actions are on improving pupils' progress. Subject improvement plans do not link well enough to support whole-school priorities.
- The school's assessment systems for key stage 3 do not provide leaders with helpful information to support pupils' learning.
- Leaders have not ensured that the school's website contains all required information.

## Full report

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

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that senior leaders:
  - use the school's, and subject, improvement plans to focus on improving the weaknesses identified in their self-evaluation and sharpen the success criteria so that leaders and governors can measure the school's effectiveness in accelerating pupils' progress
  - provide the governing body with regular, high-quality information about pupils' progress and the quality of teaching
  - tailor teachers' professional development to their individual needs
  - develop an effective system to monitor pupils' progress at key stage 3, so that leaders and teachers provide pupils with any support and challenge they may need
  - provide subject leaders with support and training so that they better understand how to evaluate the quality of teaching in their subject areas
  - reduce the variability between different subjects in key stage 4, so that rates of pupils' progress are consistently above the national average
  - provide parents with all relevant information through the school's website.
- Improve the quality of teaching and eliminate the inconsistencies in learning by ensuring that all teachers:
  - demand more from pupils
  - make effective use of pupils' assessments and fill any gaps in pupils' learning they identify
  - provide pupils with opportunities to engage in and be inspired by their learning.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Senior leaders, the governing body and trustees are all ambitious for pupils and for the school. During a period of staff restructuring and redundancies, they have worked hard to ensure that standards have continued to improve. Senior leaders have taken effective action to address identified weaknesses. Pupils' progress has accelerated since the last inspection.
- Leaders have worked with members of the new academy trust for several months. The academy trust members have provided high-quality support and challenge to the leaders and governors of the school during this time. Leaders make effective use of the good advice they receive from the academy trust and from their links with other schools.
- Leaders provide pupils with a wide range of subjects to study. They enhance the school's curriculum by offering numerous extra-curricular activities. Pupils enjoy taking part in sporting activities and a variety of clubs. They also benefit from a programme of trips and visits. Leaders, however, do not share all relevant information about the key stage 3 curriculum on the school's website.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Leaders successfully promote British values through the curriculum. Enrichment activities help pupils to develop positive attitudes and values. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.
- Senior leaders support pupils well during transition into and from the school. There are strong links with the school's feeder schools. Parents expressed a positive view of the school's first Year 6 to Year 7 transition. Links with other post-16 educational establishments are also strong.
- Leaders plan carefully to ensure that the pupil premium funding provides effective support for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders know each member of this small group of pupils well. They measure the difference the extra programmes make in helping pupils. This personalised support contributes to the accelerated progress disadvantaged pupils now make.
- Leaders make good use of the extra funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. All staff know this small group of pupils well and provide them with strong support and care.
- The school has a few Year 7 pupils who need extra literacy and numeracy support. Leaders use the funding available for these pupils to help them to catch up with their peers. Information about this spending is not available to parents on the school's website.
- Most teachers use the school's feedback policy well to support pupils' learning. Pupils make effective use of the feedback teachers provide. They use it to improve their work and understanding. Pupils told the inspectors that they find this feedback useful.
- Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching have improved. They use a hands-on approach to develop teachers' skills. The quality of teaching has improved, but leaders have yet to eliminate weaker practice in some teaching. Teachers new to the profession receive appropriate development opportunities.

- Senior leaders now apply the processes they use to manage teachers' performance more thoroughly. However, teachers' improvement targets do not focus well enough on addressing their individual needs. Furthermore, they do not link well enough to accelerating pupils' progress.
- Leaders make effective use of assessment systems to record pupils' progress at key stage 4. The school's assessment systems at key stage 3, however, are not as effective. For key stage 3, assessment information does not provide leaders with enough detail to know if pupils need any extra support or challenge.
- Leaders have a realistic view of how well the school is doing. Their plans for development, however, do not focus well enough on their self-evaluation. The success criteria included in the school improvement plan are not clearly focused or easily measurable. Leaders and governors, therefore, are not able to accurately measure the difference their actions make on improving pupils' progress.
- Subject leaders do not have a deep enough understanding of how to measure any improvement in the quality of teaching in their subject areas. Their subject improvement plans do not contribute well enough to the whole-school improvement plan to support its success.

## **Governance of the school**

- There have been recent changes to the membership and structure of the governing body. The newly formed governing body has taken decisive action to bring in more support from a multi-academy trust. They have played an active role in resolving the school's poor financial situation and in bringing stability to the school.
- The governing body members have a broad range of skills and experience. They use this, together with relevant training, to improve their effectiveness. Governors have a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths. They know what the school needs to do to improve further.
- The governing body provides a balance of challenge and support to the school's leaders. Governors assure themselves that leaders are making accurate evaluations by gathering information first-hand. They make visits to the school, meet with staff and talk with pupils. However, senior leaders do not routinely provide the governors with all the information they need. This is especially true for information about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.
- The governing body monitors the funding for targeted groups of pupils. Governors make sure that leaders use it effectively to support eligible pupils.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders carry out employment checks on staff and volunteers. They keep detailed, high-quality records in relation to keeping children safe.
- Training provides staff with up-to-date information about safeguarding issues. This includes issues associated with radicalisation and extremism. Staff understand the

procedures to follow if they have a concern for the safety or well-being of pupils. Staff are attentive in their daily practice. Pupils know that they can speak to staff if they have a concern.

- The school works closely with a range of other agencies. The designated teacher for child protection and safeguarding follows up concerns and makes any necessary referrals in a timely manner.
- The school's curriculum provides pupils with learning opportunities to help them to understand how to keep safe. Pupils who spoke with the inspectors said that they feel safe. The school's own pupil surveys agreed with this view.
- Parents, through Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the school's own parental surveys, agreed that their children are safe and cared for well.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Leaders have focused on the weaknesses in teaching identified at the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved over time and the overall quality is now good.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are positive. The vast majority of staff have high expectations of their pupils. Pupils are very keen to learn and are eager to do well. The majority of pupils take great pride in their work.
- Pupils make good use of the feedback teachers provide to improve their knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils told the inspectors that they appreciate the time teachers give them to improve their work. This was observed to be particularly effective during Year 7 geography. Pupils made good use of the time they were given to correct their misconceptions about map work.
- Homework plays an important role in improving pupils' understanding. Teachers set homework activities which match pupils' needs and consolidate their learning. Pupils told the inspectors that they find their homework helpful.
- Teaching assistants and teachers provide strong support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They have high expectations of these pupils. Targeted work helps to extend pupils' learning and pupils make good progress.
- Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subjects. Most share this with their pupils. For example, Year 8 pupils were highly engaged when learning German, as they identified patterns in new words. Some teachers, however, do not engage pupils as well in their learning. At times, pupils appear less interested in the tasks they are set.
- Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to ask pupils challenging questions. They encourage discussion and thinking among pupils. In Year 11 English, the teacher used skilful questioning to make pupils think harder. Pupils' understanding of the link between personality traits and the characters in a text was successfully deepened as a result.
- Teachers carry out regular assessments of how well pupils are doing. Most use these assessments to ensure that pupils complete tasks that are well-matched to their different abilities. In some lessons, however, teachers do not use pupils' assessment information well enough to fill the gaps identified in pupils' learning.

- Teachers provide activities which challenge pupils and increase their level of understanding. In Year 11 history, pupils were learning about 12th-century kings. Deep discussions and self-analysis of evidence provided by the teacher created a high level of challenge for the pupils. Overall, the most able pupils are reaching higher standards in their learning than they have done in previous years. However, this is not yet true in all lessons. Pupils say that they are challenged more in some lessons than others.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils show high levels of consideration and respect for others. They are confident and articulate. Pupils wear their uniform smartly and take pride in being a member of their school community.
- Instances of bullying are rare. Pupils told the inspectors that staff deal with them swiftly if they do occur.
- Leaders address pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the taught curriculum and through a range of other enriching experiences. Leaders are effective in promoting fundamental British values, and pupils know how to be good citizens. Pupils are encouraged to become confident adults who can make a positive contribution to society.
- Pupils are actively involved in a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils take part in team-building events, music tours and language exchanges. Visits to Auschwitz, theatres and the Houses of Parliament support pupils' strong cultural development.
- Pupils have a good understanding about how to keep themselves safe. There is a comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE). Pupils learn how to improve their lifestyles, build effective relationships, take care of their health and manage finances. Pupils take part enthusiastically in the many physical education activities available to them.
- Leaders provide pupils with good information and advice about their next options. They supplement this information with impartial, independent careers guidance.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are courteous and polite to visitors, adults and each other. Their conduct is orderly and calm. Pupils arrive at school on time and are punctual to their lessons.
- Leaders' recordings of incidents of poor behaviour show a declining trend. The number of fixed-term exclusions has decreased over time.
- Pupils' attendance is similar to the national average. The number of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who are persistently absent is higher than the national average. The school's current attendance information shows improved attendance for both these groups of pupils.

- In the majority of lessons, pupils show positive attitudes to learning. Most pupils arrive ready to take part in the activities teachers set. They listen to each other and work well together. When teaching does not challenge or capture the interests of pupils, a minority of pupils switch off from their learning.

### Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils make good progress. Pupils' progress in mathematics is strong. Their progress in English has improved year on year and is now good. Most pupils achieve relevant qualifications to move on to their next stages of education, training or employment.
- Attainment has risen over the past three years. Overall, pupils' GCSE grades in English and in mathematics are above the national average.
- In 2016, disadvantaged pupils' progress was slower than that of other pupils nationally. The school's current assessment information suggests that disadvantaged pupils' progress has improved. In some subjects, disadvantaged pupils attain better standards than their peers.
- The progress of the small number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good.
- The most able pupils have not made the same progress as similar pupils nationally. The school's current assessment information shows that they are now achieving higher standards in most subjects.
- Pupils make good progress and attain highly in a range of different subjects. This is not yet the case, however, for all subjects. Leaders are working to improve subjects where pupils' progress is not good enough. A few subjects, including computer science and history, however, do not show any improving trend.
- Currently, pupils select their key stage 4 options in their previous school. The number of pupils who study the English Baccalaureate subjects is lower than the national average. Leaders are working hard to increase this. The proportion of pupils who achieve the English Baccalaureate is below the national average, but is increasing.
- Pupils now join the school in Year 7. The small number of Year 7 pupils who need extra support in literacy and numeracy make good progress. Leaders do not yet measure pupils' progress in the different key stage 3 subjects well enough to know how much progress pupils are making.

### 16 to 19 study programmes

**Good**

- Leadership of the sixth form is good. Leaders have high expectations and students' good progress has been maintained.
- Students are safe and told the inspectors that they feel safe. Students behave well, and their relationships with their teachers and their peers are positive. Their attendance has improved over the last few years and is now good.
- Students make good progress in the sixth form. In some subjects, they make rapid progress and achieve well above national averages. Girls make good progress, but it is not as rapid as boys' progress. The number of disadvantaged students who join the

sixth form is low, but this is increasing. Disadvantaged students' progress is good.

- A few students begin their studies without a good GCSE grade in English or in mathematics. The proportion who make good progress and improve their grades in these subjects is higher than national averages.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. Some teaching is outstanding. Teachers use questioning well to challenge students, stimulate their interests and engage them in learning. In media studies, for example, the teacher used targeted questions to probe students' thinking and fully engage them in their learning.
- Where there is high-quality teaching, it provides students with a clear sense of direction and purpose. In A-level physics, a well-structured approach to the lesson ensured that students gained a clear understanding in their learning about circular motion. Leaders have not, however, eliminated inconsistencies in the quality of teaching similar to those seen in the main school.
- Leaders provide students with effective programmes of study. There is a vast range of different A-level subjects available from which the students can choose. A few students take a one-year GCSE equivalent programme.
- Leaders provide students with opportunities and experiences that enable them to develop a wide range of skills. This includes a strong PSHE programme. Students participate in relevant work experience and have access to a well-rounded enrichment programme.
- Students enjoy being part of the sixth form and are good role models for younger pupils. They carry out charitable work and take part in peer-mentoring and reading-buddy programmes.
- Impartial careers advice enables students to consider different career paths. Students are well prepared for their future. Leaders provide students with high-quality support in making applications to other educational establishments. Most students move on to higher education.



## School details

Unique reference number	137161
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10031183

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	948
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	436
Appropriate authority	The academy trust
Chair	Dr Paul Machon
Principal	Richard Taylor (acting principal)
Telephone number	01858 440770
Website	<a href="http://www.rsacademy.co.uk">www.rsacademy.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@rsacademy.co.uk">office@rsacademy.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	10–11 March 2015

## Information about this school

- The Robert Smyth Academy is an average-sized secondary school. In September 2016, the school began accepting pupils from the age of 11. The school became part of the Tudor Grange Academies Trust on 1 September 2017. The school is also part of the Tudor Grange Teaching School Alliance.
- There have been several staffing changes since the last inspection. The school has also undergone a staff restructuring programme over the last year. The vice-principal is now the acting principal. Some staff have been internally promoted to senior leadership positions.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an

additional language is small. The school has a higher proportion of boys than most schools.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well below average. A small number of pupils are supported by the Year 7 catch-up premium.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the school who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- Currently, no pupils are taught off-site.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about its use of the additional catch-up funding on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 38 lessons. Some of this learning was observed jointly with a senior leader.
- Discussions took place with school staff, members of the governing body and trustees.
- The inspectors met with three groups of pupils and talked to pupils informally. They also observed tutor time, social time and two assemblies.
- Inspectors listened to pupils in Year 7 reading.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a broad range of evidence, including the school's analysis of its strengths and weaknesses; planning and monitoring documentation; the work in pupils' books; records relating to attendance and behaviour; and the school's information on pupils' current attainment and progress in a range of different subjects.
- The 114 responses submitted by parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, were taken into account. This included the 86 free-text responses made by parents. Inspectors also reviewed the school's own parental, pupil and staff surveys. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey from staff or pupils.
- The school's child protection and safeguarding procedures were scrutinised. A review of the school's website was made to confirm whether it met the requirements on the publication of required information.

## Inspection team

Vondra Mays, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Manz	Ofsted Inspector
Laurence Reilly	Ofsted Inspector
Matthew Sammy	Ofsted Inspector

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