

Rye College

The Grove, Rye, East Sussex TN31 7NQ

Inspection dates 22–23 May 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Over time, leaders and trustees have overseen a decline in the quality of teaching and of pupils' outcomes. Significant turbulence in staffing has limited the impact of changes made to improve the school.
- Pupils' progress across a range of subjects is weak but particularly so in mathematics.
 Disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils make inadequate progress.
- The quality of most teaching is weak. Teachers do not use assessment information to plan effectively to meet the needs of different groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The quality of teachers' questioning is poor.
- Middle leadership roles are underdeveloped. This limits the impact that leaders can have on the quality of teaching and of pupils' outcomes.

- There has not been an effective pupil premium strategy. Teachers do not understand clearly enough how to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, including in the presentation of their work and in their behaviour, are often too low.
- Teachers' performance is not managed well. There are insufficient opportunities for teachers to develop their skills.
- The new behaviour policy has not been implemented well enough. Some staff do not manage pupils' behaviour effectively and the behaviour of some pupils requires improvement.
- Some assessment information is inaccurate.
 This hinders leaders' ability to check pupils' progress accurately.

The school has the following strengths

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in English is strong. Consequently, most pupils make acceptable rates of progress in English.
- Pupils' welfare has a high priority. Pupils are well cared for and safe. Safeguarding is managed effectively. The majority of parents and carers agree.
- Most pupils behave well and attend school regularly. Behaviour is improving. Levels of exclusion and absence are reducing.
- Current leaders and trustees have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have put in place systems that are starting to improve some aspects of the school.



Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Trustees and leaders should take urgent action to improve pupils' outcomes, especially disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and the most able pupils, by ensuring that:
 - there are well-thought-out strategies for the use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - specific pupil premium funding is used to improve the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils
 - leaders and teachers plan and implement strategies that will help pupils with low levels of literacy and numeracy to catch up with their peers
 - leaders and teachers plan and implement strategies that raise the levels of challenge in lessons for the most able pupils
 - trustees regularly monitor and evaluate the use of the additional funding to check it is being used successfully.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that it is at least good by:
 - ensuring that assessment information is accurate
 - using assessment information to plan learning that meets the needs of, and challenges, pupils, especially the most able pupils and disadvantaged pupils
 - developing the skills and expertise of staff, particularly with regard to supporting disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - providing effective professional development, training and support for teachers, particularly in the use of questioning to develop pupils' thinking
 - ensuring that pupils' misconceptions are addressed and that pupils understand how to improve their work
 - further improving teachers' practice in mathematics
 - raising teachers' expectations of standards of presentation and behaviour.
- Strengthen the quality of leadership and management so that it is at least good by making sure that:
 - a sustainable and effective leadership and teaching structure is in place
 - the roles of middle leaders are further developed so that they can have a more positive impact on pupils' outcomes and on the quality of teaching
 - there is a well-thought-out strategy for improving rapidly the quality of teaching, learning and assessment

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- the management of behaviour improves further, including by embedding the expectations in behaviour policy so that they are understood by all and used effectively, by improving attendance and by reducing exclusion
- the curriculum is equitable and meets pupils' different needs effectively
- staff performance is regularly monitored and reviewed, and staff are held more firmly to account for the quality of their work and for pupils' outcomes.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.



Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders and those responsible for governance have not used pupil premium funding appropriately. It has been insufficiently focused on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Current leaders have identified the barriers that disadvantaged pupils have, and have commissioned an external review of the use of this funding. However, the impact of this work on teachers' practice is not evident. As a result, there is a lack of equality of opportunity for this group of pupils. They underachieve significantly.
- The catch-up funding and the funding to support the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are not spent sufficiently in line with pupils' requirements. This year, some limited improvements have been made which are starting to raise outcomes for some pupils.
- Leaders currently in the school have addressed a number of challenges, including the previous use of unofficial exclusion and inaccurately kept attendance records. This raised safeguarding concerns relating to the safety of pupils frequently absent from school. Leaders have addressed this swiftly and effectively so that pupils previously absent are in school and safe.
- Over time, the curriculum has not been organised well enough to provide a broad and balanced education for pupils. Not enough time has been devoted to the teaching of science. The curriculum and teaching in mathematics have been poor. Consequently, pupils make inadequate progress in these subjects. Insufficient time has been devoted to language teaching at key stage 3 so that few pupils choose to continue studying a language into key stage 4.
- Changes to the curriculum have been made to benefit current pupils. This includes increased teaching time in science at key stage 4, improvements to the curriculum in mathematics and changes to the process for pupils choosing the subjects that they will study at key stage 4. Careful attention has been paid by leaders to make sure that pupils study subjects that meet their needs. As a result, the curriculum has more breadth and is balanced more effectively than in the past.
- Overall, the school makes sure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils benefit from extra-curricular trips and visits, such as to the theatre to see the plays studied in English or to universities to experience what further study might be like. Numerous sporting and music clubs augment pupils' experiences. Pupils report that they value highly the personal, social, health and economic education they receive, although some feel that they have not had sufficient education about sex and relationships.
- Over time, leaders have not ensured that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is adequate. Leaders had an inaccurate understanding of the quality of teaching because they did not monitor it effectively. Teachers have not been held to account well enough for the quality and impact of their work. Furthermore, there has been no effective programme of continued professional development for staff. As a result, some staff do not recognise that the quality of their practice is inadequate.

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- Middle leaders are underused. Consequently, the impact that they can have on improving the quality of teaching and of pupils' outcomes is limited. Middle leaders are enthusiastic and have made some improvements to assessment practice, curriculum content and teaching. Improvements have been made in pockets throughout the school. However, leaders recognise that these improvements have not been widespread enough. Current plans to strengthen the role of middle leaders in the coming year are well thought through.
- There has been significant turbulence in leadership over a number of years. This year has seen a reduction in the number of leadership roles, as well as in levels of staffing throughout the school. Consequently, current leaders have had to make substantial changes to the organisation of the school. Current leaders show an absolute determination that pupils from all backgrounds should achieve their potential. They are making the right changes for the benefit of pupils in the school. The impact of these changes are starting to be seen, for example in improvements to the curriculum, aspects of assessment practice and pupils' attendance. Appointments have been made to two additional senior leadership roles to begin in September, adding to the capacity of leaders to make further improvements to the school.
- Staff reaction to changes in leadership has been mixed. Some welcome the changes, including support and training provided for middle leaders in their roles. Rightly, leaders are starting to hold staff to account more effectively for the quality of their work, for example through improved use of the appraisal system. However, there is negativity among some staff, particularly surrounding the implementation of the new behaviour policy. Similarly, some pupils and parents expressed dissatisfaction with the changes that leaders have made. Leaders recognise that there is some unrest. Further changes to leadership roles and increased capacity at all levels of leadership are aimed at reducing such tensions.

Governance of the school

- Following an inspection of another school in the Rye Academy Trust last year, a review of the trust's governance was recommended. As a result of the review, the local governing body was disbanded and many of the trustees were replaced. A new trust board has been in place since October 2017. Further formal support has since been provided from the Aquinas multi-academy trust.
- Over time, governors and former trustees did not have an accurate or sufficient understanding of the performance of the school. This has been remedied. Current trustees have demonstrated capacity to improve the school. They have an accurate and in-depth understanding of the weaknesses and relative strengths of the school. They challenge senior leaders about the school's effectiveness. They have worked hard to ensure that necessary improvements have been made to safeguarding procedures and that school policies are updated and compliant with current legislation.
- Trustees have brokered much useful support for the school, including reviews currently under way of the use of pupil premium funding, catch-up funding and funding to support the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The local authority and Beacon Academy also provide useful support for leaders.
- The focus of the trustees has been on securing the financial stability of the trust and



arranging for the rebrokerage of the schools within the trust. Evidence gathered during the inspection demonstrated that plans for rebrokerage are at an advanced stage.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have ensured that there are suitable systems in place to keep pupils safe. Leaders undertake appropriate checks on the suitability of adults to work in the school. Staff receive relevant training so that they know the signs that may indicate a pupil needs help, and they know how to report any concerns. Governors check regularly adults' understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities.
- In the past, attendance records were not kept accurately. Some pupils were allowed to leave the school before completing their education. Some pupils with high levels of absence were not encouraged to attend more often, particularly those with poor behaviour. Current leaders have addressed these significant issues rapidly and effectively. They work very well with outside agencies to ensure that all pupils are accounted for and safe, and that their behaviour improves.
- Most pupils feel well cared for and safe. Pupils know what to do and who to speak to if they have any concerns. They know how to stay safe online. However, several pupils expressed concern about the state of the school toilets, some of which are in a state of disrepair. During the inspection, leaders provided evidence of ongoing repairs and updating of toilet resources. A significant refurbishment is planned for the summer. In the meantime, leaders continue to prioritise the cleanliness and state of repair of these facilities.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Teachers do not plan effectively to meet pupils' needs. Too often, pupils all get the same work, irrespective of their starting points and learning needs. The most able pupils are not challenged sufficiently. Support for disadvantaged pupils is inadequate. Teachers' low expectations mean that too many pupils do not reach their full potential.
- Teaching does not promote equality of opportunity for disadvantaged pupils. Over time, insufficient focus has been placed on meeting the needs of these pupils. Many staff demonstrate a lack of understanding of the barriers that disadvantaged pupils face. This has resulted in inadequate progress and substantial underachievement for disadvantaged pupils across the curriculum.
- Teachers' questioning skills are poor. All too frequently, teachers explain concepts without checking or probing pupils' understanding. Sometimes, teachers do not pay enough attention to the questions pupils have about their work. Consequently, pupils are typically passive during lessons and can lose focus.
- Literacy is not well developed across the curriculum. Too few opportunities exist for pupils to develop and demonstrate a depth of understanding, for example through extended writing tasks. This particularly slows the progress of the most able pupils. While teaching assistants work sensitively with the least able pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, support for those pupils who need to catch up with their literacy skills has not been planned well enough. These pupils do make enough

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progress over time.

- Teaching in mathematics is poor so that, over time, pupils make inadequate progress. Pupils reflect that teachers' lack of subject knowledge means that, when pupils make errors, teachers do not help them to understand where they went wrong and how to improve. Recent developments, including to the curriculum and in planning, are not yet securing improvements in teaching quality.
- Over time, learning and teaching in science, particularly at key stage 3, have been poor. Recent improvements to the quality of teaching are starting to make a difference. This is particularly the case when teachers make effective use of assessment to help pupils identify and address gaps in their understanding.
- Teachers have low expectations of the standard of work pupils are capable of. Often, teachers do not address errors in pupils' work and incomplete work is not checked. Teachers often do not challenge pupils who are not making enough effort with their work and, consequently, learning slows.
- Approaches to assessment and feedback across the school are underdeveloped and inconsistent in practice. Teachers do not routinely use assessment of pupils' understanding to plan pupils' next steps in learning. Leaders know where assessment and tracking information is unreliable and are working to address this. Use of assessment is developing in humanities and science but is particularly weak in mathematics. Assessment in English and art is more accurate and used more effectively to help pupils to make progress.
- Several parents and pupils expressed concern that turbulence in staffing has impacted on pupils' behaviour, particularly during 'cover lessons'. Inspectors found this to be an accurate view in some cases. However, more frequently, low- and mid-level disruption are a result of poorly planned learning, a lack of challenge and low expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. In addition, the new behaviour policy has not been embedded well enough throughout the school.
- There are some pockets of strength in teaching, particularly in English, where there is a rigorous approach to planning and assessing pupils' work. Standards of literacy are higher in English than in other subjects. Teachers' strong subject knowledge and clear expectations help pupils overall to make adequate progress, although disadvantaged pupils are not helped to make sufficient progress.
- Many pupils work very hard in lessons, particularly those who are self-motivated to learn. Notably, where learning is well structured and the behaviour policy used consistently, pupils' behaviour is good and they make strong progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Adults build pupils' resilience, for example through encouraging pupils' self-belief. However, many pupils are not self-confident in their learning. Frequently, pupils' books show that many do not take pride in their work. The standards of pupils' handwriting

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and presentation are lower than they should be, particularly for boys. Sometimes pupils can lose focus and disrupt learning.

- Pupils have a clear understanding of what bullying is, including cyber bullying. Most pupils, particularly those in key stage 3, say that it is rare and that, should it happen, adults deal with it promptly and effectively. Records show that there has been a sharp reduction in incidents of bullying this year. However, responses to the online surveys show that some parents, pupils and staff remain concerned about levels of bullying.
- Pupils know that adults in school care about their safety and well-being. Pupils especially value 'the Hub', where they can go to access support should they have any problems. All pupils spoken to were confident that an adult would help them should they need someone to talk to. Levels of care for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, particularly those with medical needs, are high and valued by parents and pupils.
- Pupils are self-aware and forthright in their opinions. They are protective of each other and of their school. They are confident and at ease when talking to visitors. Some warm working relationships between staff and pupils exist. Several parents commented on the dedication of staff.
- There are some opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills, for example through joining the school council or being appointed 'head boy' or 'head girl'. However, few pupils take up such opportunities. Plans to improve pupils' participation are in the early stages of development.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. While most pupils behave well, the recently introduced behaviour policy has not been well received and is inconsistently applied. There is a lack of clarity among pupils and staff over the revised expectations of pupils' behaviour. This results in some disruption in class going unchallenged.
- Previously, leaders allowed poorly behaved pupils to remain out of school for long periods of time. This use of unofficial exclusion resulted in any underlying behaviour issues not being dealt with. Current leaders have, rightly, addressed this so that pupils previously allowed to stay away from school must now attend. This practice resulted in increased levels of recorded behavioural incidents in school at the start of the year.
- New leaders deal with incidents of poor behaviour swiftly and effectively, including through the use of exclusion. Staff, pupils and parents expressed concern about pupils' behaviour, some citing specific high-level incidents. Records show that such incidents are perpetrated by a minority of pupils, predominantly by pupils who have previously been absent from school. This has resulted in higher levels of exclusion than in the past, but records show that, over the course of the year, exclusions are reducing substantially, indicating that behaviour is improving.
- Pupils are accepting of each other's differences. They have a good understanding of racism and do not tolerate it in their school. They say that it is all right to be gay in school, although they also reflect that some phrases, such as 'you're gay', are used as casual swearing. Pupils say that the use of bad language is not challenged enough by adults.



■ Most pupils do attend school regularly. The true level of pupils' attendance in the past was not fully understood because records were inaccurate. Current leaders have addressed this very effectively, including by ensuring that those pupils who had been allowed to not attend school do now attend. The attendance of pupils who have previously been persistently absent is much improved. Leaders recognise that further improvements in attendance are necessary, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Over time, pupils' outcomes are not strong enough. In 2015 and 2016, pupils' progress across a broad range of subjects was significantly below average. In 2017, a slight improvement in pupils' overall progress was largely a result of pupils taking the European Computer Driving Licence course which, this year, no longer contributes to national measures of pupils' overall progress.
- Published national measures of pupils' progress in 2017 show that progress is average overall. However, this masks significant variability across different subjects and between groups of pupils. While pupils by the end of key stage 4 achieved average rates of progress in English, science and humanities, progress in mathematics was significantly below average. While middle- and low-attaining pupils made average rates of progress, most-able pupils' progress was too slow. The rate of progress of disadvantaged pupils was inadequate. The pattern for current pupils is similar throughout the school.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress is too slow. They are not challenged to catch up with others with similar starting points nationally. As a result, last year, disadvantaged pupils achieved an average of one and a half grades lower than other pupils nationally in GCSE examinations. The progress of disadvantaged pupils in English and mathematics is improving slightly but not rapidly enough. Although leaders have identified the barriers to learning for this group, teachers are not providing for their needs in lessons.
- A lack of challenge in lessons over time, insufficient use of assessment of pupils' understanding and poor questioning are limiting the progress of the most able pupils. This means that they do not achieve the high standards of which they are capable, particularly in mathematics and science.
- Over an extended period, pupils have made slow progress in science, particularly at key stage 3. Leaders are addressing this currently so that pupils are making slightly better progress than in the past. However, the inconsistent quality of teaching and assessment in science is limiting pupils' progress. Pupils' progress in languages is slow for similar reasons.
- Weak teaching in mathematics means that pupils do not achieve highly enough in the subject. Current work to improve the quality of the mathematics curriculum has not significantly improved pupils' current rates of progress.
- Over time, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make poor rates of progress. Work to address this is in its early stages and has yet to show an impact for current pupils.
- Current leaders recognise that pupils' rates of progress are too slow. Their focus on improving pupils' literacy and mathematics skills is resulting in some improvement to



- outcomes in English and mathematics for pupils currently in Year 11. However, such improvements are not replicated across the school.
- As a result of weak teaching and low outcomes, pupils are not prepared well enough for their next stages of education, training or employment. There have been some notable improvements to the quality of information, advice and guidance that pupils receive when thinking about their next stages, so that most pupils do go on to further study. However, pupils' low aspirations were evident during the inspection and some pupils said that they would like to receive more advice from a younger age.



School details

Unique reference number 138624

Local authority East Sussex

Inspection number 10037805

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 16

Gender of pupils Mixed

Number of pupils on the school roll 622

Appropriate authority Board of trustees

Lead executive Andrew Ferguson

Headteacher Barry Blakelock

Telephone number 01797 222 545

Website www.ryecollege.co.uk

Email address barry.blakelock@ryeacademytrust.org

Date of previous inspection 10–11 July 2013

Information about this school

- Rye College is part of the Rye Academy Trust. The Rye Academy Trust consists of Rye Community Primary School, Rye College and Rye Studio School. The lead executive was appointed in April 2018.
- Following an inspection at Rye Studio School, the Rye Academy Trust carried out a review of governance. As a result of this, the local governing bodies of each of the three schools were disbanded in October 2017 and a new group of trustees appointed to oversee all the schools in the trust.
- The trust has received a financial warning notice from the Education and Skills Funding Agency. As a result, all of the trust's schools have been directed by the Department for Education to join another trust by September 2018.
- Since the last inspection, the local authority became aware of the inaccuracy of attendance information provided by leaders. This means that previously published attendance information is inaccurate. The local authority and current leaders have

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addressed this issue effectively so that current attendance information is now accurate.

- Since the last inspection, there has been significant turbulence in staffing. There have been several changes at school leadership level. Last year, in particular, saw over 20 staff leave the school, including all senior leaders. The current senior leadership team is much reduced in size. All three senior leaders are seconded to the school. Middle leadership roles, including 'quality leaders' and some 'faculty leaders', were newly set up in September 2017.
- The trust has brokered the services of Aquinas Church of England Education Trust, Bromley. It provides support for the school, including providing two trustees as advisers to the Rye Trust Board, as well as the current headteacher. In addition, it is supporting leaders in reviewing the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, the use of the pupil premium and some other aspects of leadership.
- Beacon Academy, Crowborough provides support for the school, including two seconded deputy headteachers.
- Trustees have also brokered the services of a leadership consultant through the local authority.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British origin. There is a very low proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- Approximately one third of pupils are disadvantaged. This is broadly in line with the national average.
- There are slightly fewer pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities than in secondary schools nationally.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school currently uses no providers of alternative education.



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Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, trustees and with a range of staff. They spoke to leaders providing support for the school, including the headteacher of Beacon Academy. Inspectors considered the 58 responses to the confidential staff survey.
- Inspectors observed learning in 33 lessons and conducted additional short visits to classes covering 10 more lessons. Some lessons were jointly observed with leaders.
- A range of pupils' work was scrutinised in lessons and during a meeting with senior leaders.
- Inspectors evaluated key documents, including the school's self-evaluation and strategic planning documents, minutes of meetings, attendance and behaviour records and records relating to pupils' safety and academic progress. Inspectors reviewed the checks made on staff about their suitability to work with children.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaks, lunchtimes, around the school and in lessons.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally and formally, as well as taking into account the 85 responses to confidential questionnaires received from pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the 63 responses from parents on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. The lead inspector also met with a group of parents.

Inspection team

| Catherine Old, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Jeremy Single | Ofsted Inspector |
| Colin Lankester | Ofsted Inspector |
| Ann Fearon | Ofsted Inspector |



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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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