

Rugby Free Secondary School

Anderson Avenue, Rugby, Warwickshire CV22 5PE

Inspection dates

14–15 May 2019

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Senior leaders have an overgenerous view of their school's effectiveness. They have not acted to stem the decline at the school. Consequently, pupils' behaviour, the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make, especially middle-ability pupils, are weak.
- Senior leaders are reluctant to acknowledge weaknesses at the school. Therefore, they fail to address swiftly any issues as they arise.
- The quality of teaching is marred by inconsistencies. While some teaching meets the needs of pupils, mainly for the most able, a significant proportion of teaching is weak and does not ensure that pupils, especially those of middle ability, make the progress they should.
- Ineffective teaching and an inconsistent approach to managing pupils' behaviour have resulted in many incidents of low-level disruptions in lessons that halt the learning of pupils. Leaders are too accepting of that type of behaviour and fail to address it consistently.
- Leaders' weak communication has resulted in a breakdown of relationships between the body of staff. Consequently, morale at the school is extremely low.
- Pupils do not consistently demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They choose which teachers they will behave for and which they will not. Too many arrive late to lessons and leave lessons throughout for no apparent reasons. Leaders and teachers do not deal effectively with this type of behaviour.
- Governors in the past have not acted swiftly enough to hold leaders to account for the falling standards of behaviour and the quality of teaching at the school.
- The curriculum offers a wide range of appropriate subjects. The current weaknesses in teaching and behaviour hinder the curriculum being taught effectively.

The school has the following strengths

- The 'Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow' multi-academy trust (MAT) has begun to address the weaknesses at the school and is well placed to continue its improvement work.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well. They achieve well and make good progress.
- All pupils receive effective, independent advice and guidance about future career paths. Pupils are well informed about their next steps.
- The school's work to offer pastoral care promotes pupils' personal development. The support staff provide for the most vulnerable pupils is strong.

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?

- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders strengthen the communication and relationships among staff so that all work together to improve this school
 - leaders systematically and realistically evaluate the effectiveness of the school and act swiftly to improve any weaknesses
 - all staff apply consistently the school's policies, especially those relating to behaviour
 - leaders gain quickly an accurate view of the quality of teaching so that plans can be put in place to improve teaching.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that all groups of pupils, especially the middle-ability and disadvantaged pupils, make the progress they are capable of by ensuring that:
 - teachers plan lessons that match the needs and abilities of pupils, especially middle-ability pupils
 - teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - senior leaders systematically and in sufficient detail evaluate and monitor the quality of teaching so that they can identify any underperformance quickly
 - teachers set tasks that engage and motivate pupils so that they do not become disengaged, display off-task behaviour or take part in low-level disruption.
- Improve the behaviour of pupils by ensuring that:
 - senior leaders formulate and implement a behaviour policy that is consistently applied by staff and understood by pupils
 - leaders do not accept standards of behaviour from pupils that disrupt learning or waste learning time
 - staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct in lessons.
- Improve outcomes, particularly for middle-ability and disadvantaged pupils, by ensuring that pupils complete their work and that teachers address systematically pupils' misconceptions.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding 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

- Senior leaders hold an unrealistic and overgenerous view of the effectiveness of their school. They have not been successful in spotting or stemming the decline in the standard of education at the school. Therefore, the quality of teaching, behaviour and outcomes for pupils is weak.
- Relationships between staff are broken and morale at the school is extremely low. Approximately half of the staff support senior leaders, while the other half feel that senior leaders are unsupportive, unapproachable and ineffective in their roles. Consequently, all stakeholders at the school lack clear leadership.
- The MAT has begun to address this issue. It has a clear view of the school's effectiveness and is realistic about what needs to improve immediately. Plans in place to urgently address some of the weaknesses at the school are clear, concise and well formulated. The chief executive officer (CEO) and the chair of the trust board are well placed to carry out the necessary improvements.
- Leadership of teaching and learning lacks precision and sufficient detail to accurately identify weaknesses. As a result, teaching has declined and pupils make less progress than they should. During the time of the inspection, leaders believed that teaching at the school was good. They failed to correctly identify that a significant proportion of pupils were underachieving because of weak teaching practices and poor behaviour.
- Assessment systems are not developed effectively. Leaders collect information about pupils at various times throughout the year. However, assessments happen during set times in the calendar rather than at certain points in pupils' learning. Consequently, some pupils, especially the most able, wait to be assessed and to be moved on in their learning.
- Senior leaders have developed a curriculum that offers an appropriate range of subjects for pupils to study. As more pupils join the school and move into key stage 4, leaders have plans in place to broaden the offer further and ensure that pupils have the opportunity to study a wide range of subjects, including more vocational subjects. Currently, due to the weaknesses at the school, the curriculum is not effectively taught.
- Middle leaders form a dedicated and professional group of teachers. They have a clear understanding of their roles and complete a wide range of monitoring activities to improve their subject areas. Many of them are new to the school and have brought their expertise from previous schools. Middle leaders are well set to drive school improvements.
- Leaders' spending of the pupil premium funding has not been as effective as it could be. Interventions are put in place without careful analysis of pupils' barriers to learning. Some disadvantaged pupils catch up as a result of these interventions. Current tracking of the effectiveness of intervention strategies lacks precision. As a result, leaders are not able to identify which strategy or intervention is effective and which is not.
- Leaders' work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) understanding is strong. The programme to promote this aspect of the school's work is embedded well across the curriculum and through further additional activities. These

include pit stops in lessons where pupils have discussion opportunities, outside speakers, form time and bespoke assemblies.

- Leaders use alternative provision for a very small number of pupils. They have been too reliant on the local authority to complete checks on and visits to the settings rather than doing this themselves.

Governance of the school

- Members of the governing body, although dedicated and proud of their school, have not held school leaders to account for the declining behaviour and quality of teaching. In the past, they have not provided sufficient challenge on important matters to bring about much-needed improvements.
- The work of governors in recent months has been more effective. Members have taken more active roles in checking the validity of the information with which they have been provided. There has been a renewed drive to focus on the quality of teaching and the progress pupils are making.
- Members of the MAT have provided an adequate level of challenge and support to senior leaders. They understand the school's strengths and weaknesses and are clear on how to tackle these. They are ambitious for their school and want every child to succeed.
- The work to improve the school has already begun. Evidence seen suggests that the CEO and the chair of the board of trustees have formulated clear plans to bring about rapid improvements. The MAT is well placed to strengthen the improvement drive and bring about the necessary changes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff receive regular safeguarding training which is underpinned by updates for every member of staff at the school. Staff know the local area the school serves well and have good relationships with the families they work with.
- Most staff agree that pupils are safe at the school. Some staff voiced concerns that, due to some pupils' poor behaviour, pupils are not safe. Inspectors found no evidence during the inspection that pupils are unsafe.
- The safeguarding team works constructively with relevant external agencies. Staff are persistent when they are concerned about a pupil's welfare and follow up concerns with these agencies as necessary.
- All pupils who spoke with inspectors confirmed that they feel safe and secure in school. The majority of parents and carers who completed the Parent View questionnaire also confirmed that their children are safe in school. Pupils have a secure understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. They understand the risks surrounding online safety and social media, for example.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching across the curriculum is marred by inconsistencies. While some effective teaching exists, especially for most-able pupils, a significant amount of teaching fails to meet the needs of middle-ability pupils. Consequently, pupils become disengaged, their learning slows, they take part in low-level disruption and they make weak progress.
- Leaders' monitoring of teaching has lacked precision and accuracy, which has led to leaders having an overgenerous view of its quality. Consequently, they are not able to put strategies in place to address any underperformance. They have failed to identify the decline in the quality of teaching over time, and standards have dropped.
- Teaching is not consistent, and teachers do not routinely apply school policies. For example, misconceptions are not addressed quickly enough and these become errors in pupils' work over time. Literacy mistakes are left uncorrected, which results in pupils' literacy levels remaining lower than they should be. Too often, teachers' expectations of what pupils, especially those of middle ability, can achieve are too low. As a result, pupils do less work than they are capable of or leave work unfinished.
- Teachers do not plan lessons consistently well to meet the needs and abilities of pupils, especially the middle-ability pupils. As a result, work is often too easy or too difficult for them and their learning stops. Too many pupils then engage in off-task behaviour that halts the learning of other pupils in the group.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct are often too low. Too many teachers are accepting of pupils talking while they are talking and do not challenge disengaged or disrupting pupils quickly enough. Where relationships are strong and teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, learning is effective and pupils make better progress.
- Pupils with SEND and the most vulnerable pupils are well supported to make progress. They appreciate the extra help they get in lessons as this enables them to learn well. Leaders monitor and track effectively pupils with SEND and vulnerable pupils to ensure that staff have the information they need about them. As a result, these pupils make strong progress.
- Most-able pupils benefit from stronger teaching. Here, work is more effectively matched to their needs and, consequently, pupils' books show high-quality work and good literacy levels. Teachers plan tasks that stretch their thinking and deepen their learning. The most able pupils make good progress at school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils learn about a range of relevant topics through the SMSC programme in a variety of ways across the curriculum. For example, during lessons, they have 'SMSC pit stops', during which they discuss related topics. In form time, pupils discuss and learn about a

variety of topics. For example, at the time of the inspection, they were discussing the dangers of sexting.

- Pupils do not consistently or routinely display positive and self-assured attitudes to learning. As a result, they do not regularly show that they value their education.
- While pupils say that bullying is rare at the school, they have a view that it is dealt with by staff when it does occur. The majority of parents who completed Ofsted's questionnaire Parent View agreed with this view. Parents said that their children are safe when at school.
- Pupils are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves and others safe, including from dangers typically found online and on social media platforms. Pupils have a clear understanding of British values, such as the rule of law. Pupils are unanimous about their school being a safe place for everyone, regardless of their backgrounds or beliefs.
- The pastoral support provided when pupils have emotional or mental well-being concerns is effective. Pupils, parents and staff agree that vulnerable pupils receive appropriate help and support when they need it. This aspect of the school's work is strong. Many pupils spoke to inspectors about how the school has helped them overcome personal issues and how there is always someone there to speak to.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Too many pupils display poor behaviour and attitudes to learning. They consciously choose which teachers to behave for and which they will not. They say that they 'get away with it' in some lessons and then take advantage of this. Additionally, too many pupils arrive late to lessons and leave lessons throughout 'for a break'. They then walk the corridors and disrupt the learning of other classrooms.
- Leaders and teachers do not effectively tackle this type of behaviour. Their expectations of pupils' behaviour are not high enough. There is no consistent approach to the management of poor behaviour in the school. As a result, pupils misbehave and incidents of poor behaviour are rising.
- Low-level disruption occurs in lessons where the learning is not matched to pupils' needs or abilities. Leaders have not acted to address this issue. Inspectors saw many incidents where learning was slowed or halted due to pupils being disruptive in class.
- Pupils' behaviour was raised as a concern by almost 80% of staff who completed their survey and by approximately one in five parents responding to Parent View. Pupils also commented that behaviour in lessons is variable and dependent on the teacher. Many pupils said that approximately half of their lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour. Behaviour observed during breaktimes and lunchtimes can be boisterous. For example, kitchen staff commented negatively about pupils' conduct during lunchtimes.
- Attendance at the school is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is rising. As a result, too many pupils miss too much of their education. A significant proportion of pupils arrive late to school. Leaders have not recognised this as an issue or taken effective action to address it.

- Although rates of fixed-term and permanent exclusions are at the national averages, they are rising steadily. The majority of pupils excluded for a fixed-term period of time are disadvantaged pupils. These pupils' outcomes are not strong, indicating the impact that missing school has on their education.
- Leaders make use of alternative provision for a very small number of pupils. Their monitoring of pupils in alternative provision is not as effective as it should be. Leaders rely too heavily on others to complete checks and visits to the providers for them.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Work in pupils' books and assessment information show that pupils make progress that is not consistent enough. Groups of pupils underachieve considerably, namely middle-ability and disadvantaged pupils.
- While the most able and the most vulnerable pupils make stronger progress, there is a significant number of pupils, including those of middle ability, who do not make the progress they are capable of. This is because teaching does not effectively match their needs and abilities. In some cases, poor behaviour in lessons and failure by teachers to manage consistently pupils' weak attitudes to learning result in pupils not learning as well as they should.
- Some pupils' work shows low literacy levels. Spelling mistakes and grammar misconceptions are prevalent, especially in extended pieces of writing across a range of subjects. Teachers do not address these swiftly enough. Consequently, they become errors over time.
- Disadvantaged pupils make mixed progress. While the most able pupils achieve well and benefit from strong teaching, middle- and low-ability pupils do not. This results in pupils leaving their work unfinished and/or finding work too difficult or too easy. Consequently, they make less progress than their peers.
- Pupils with SEND receive effective support in lessons. They are supported well to access the learning. The special educational needs coordinator provides staff with valuable information about pupils' needs and suggestions on how to overcome some barriers in lessons. As a result of this work, pupils with SEND make strong progress.
- The provision for independent careers advice and guidance is successful. All pupils benefit from independent advice and tailored information about possible career options. Leadership of this aspect of the school's work is effective. Leaders track carefully which pupils have received information and close any gaps in pupils' knowledge as they arise. For example, pupils benefit from visits to universities and have potential future employers visit the school to talk to them. Pupils are complimentary about this aspect of their education.

School details

Unique reference number	142881
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	10088455

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	520
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	David Johnson
Headteacher	Christine Green
Telephone number	01788 222 060
Website	www.rugbyfreesecondary.co.uk
Email address	info@rugbyfreesecondary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This school opened in September 2016 with one year group. It is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. This was its first inspection.
- The school is an academy and part of the 'Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow' MAT. Governance to the school is provided by the local governing body.
- The school is registered for pupils in Years 7 to 13. Currently, there are three year groups in the school – Years 7, 8 and 9. Year 9 pupils have begun their GCSE courses this academic year.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average. The proportions of pupils with SEND and those who speak English as an additional language are above average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is above average.

- There are a very small number of pupils in part-time alternative provision placements at Dare 2 Dream and NuLogic.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation. This included: the school’s self-evaluation and action plans; school policies; information about pupils’ progress, behaviour, attendance and exclusions; and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons and parts of lessons across a wide range of subjects and in both key stages. They observed pupils’ behaviour between lessons and at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors evaluated the work in pupils’ books and folders across a range of year groups and subjects.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers, including those who are newly qualified. Inspectors also met with the CEO and the chair of the board of trustees of the MAT.
- The lead inspector met with two members of the local governing body and held a telephone conversation with the chair of the local governing body.
- The views of parents were considered through the 104 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire, as well as the 81 free-text comments parents provided.
- Inspectors held numerous discussions with a large proportion of pupils throughout the inspection and considered 22 responses to Ofsted’s pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors met with a large proportion of staff and considered the 34 responses to the staff questionnaire, as well as one letter signed by numerous staff.

Inspection team

Bianka Zemke, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Sara Arkle	Ofsted Inspector
Graeme Rudland	Ofsted Inspector
Bernadette Green	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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