

Inspection of a good school: Rockwood Academy

Naseby Road, Alum Rock, Birmingham, West Midlands B8 3HG

Inspection dates:

13–14 November 2019

Outcome

Rockwood Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Rockwood is an exciting place to learn, grow and achieve. There is a real sense of community among pupils and staff. Pupils are genuine ambassadors for their school. They believe that it is a privilege to attend their school. They feel valued as individuals and know that teachers are there to support them. Pupils understand why teachers expect the best from them. They are able to get on with their work, rarely with interruption from others. This is because behaviour is positive, and pupils get on well together. Pupils usually feel safe, although a few worry about energetic older children on the playground. Staff keep pupils safe and sort out any allegations of bullying quickly.

At Rockwood, pupils learn to gain in confidence and develop strength of character. They learn the importance of collaboration, and how this leads to stronger communities. Pupils are optimistic about their futures. School helps them on the journey to realising their potential. They develop the key employability skills needed to succeed in the future. Pupils profit immensely from wider curriculum experiences. These include sporting opportunities, overseas trips and cultural visits.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The headteacher, supported by a strong leadership team, is a formidable force for bringing about improvement. The school provides a curriculum that is fit for purpose. It supports pupils' academic achievement and wider personal development. There is a strong focus on making sure pupils are well prepared for life in a diverse society. Leaders have changed the curriculum to allow key stage 3 pupils more time to cover essential content. As a result, pupils are gaining a better depth of understanding in subjects. Pupils are also able to make more informed choices when deciding which GCSE courses to study in key stage 4.

Leaders have thought about the crucial knowledge pupils need to master over time. They have woven this into teachers' planning to create sensible sequences of learning. But the order of learning in a few subjects requires some refinement. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to explain tricky concepts to pupils. This helps pupils to make good

progress across most subjects. Teachers also ensure that pupils go back over their learning. This enables them to remember more. Teachers are getting better at supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, pupils with SEND now make better progress than in the past. Sometimes though, targeted support for these pupils is not as successful as it could be.

Over the last two years, there have been many staffing changes. This had an impact on pupils' learning and was reflected in some disappointing Year 11 results in 2018. However, staffing is now more stable. Pupils' results in 2019 were more typical of the good progress made in previous years.

Leaders provide pupils with a wealth of rich experiences to complement the curriculum. These include a wide range of clubs and events. All of these support pupils to become more confident and interested in learning. Pupils benefit from a careers programme that helps them to get ready for the next steps in education or employment and training. Leaders engage with primary schools about the transition from Year 6, but not enough is done to understand pupils' starting points on entry to Year 7. This means that some pupils spend too much time revisiting aspects of the curriculum that they have already grasped.

Pupils behave well around school. They say there is little bullying. Classrooms are calm places where pupils are polite and show consideration for others. Learning is not hindered by low-level disruption. Pupils are clear about the consequences if they do not follow the school's rules. Good levels of staff supervision mean that pupils are kept safe. Pastoral managers know pupils' ambitions, needs and concerns. They play a key role in supporting pupils' mental health and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff make keeping pupils safe a priority. They receive the necessary training to carry out their safeguarding duties. Staff know pupils well and notice when things are not right. They remain vigilant. They pick up on any changes in a pupil's behaviour that may suggest a concern. Staff report concerns to safeguarding leaders without delay. Leaders work closely with other agencies to get the right support for pupils. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through the curriculum. They learn about a comprehensive range of topics, including female genital mutilation and cyber bullying.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The sequence of learning in a few foundation subjects, including geography, is not as carefully planned as in other subjects. Leaders have not yet fully considered all the essential knowledge pupils need by the end of key stage 3 in order to be successful at key stage 4. Consequently, pupils do not do as well as they could in these subjects. Leaders need to ensure that curriculum planning enables pupils to achieve enough depth of learning by the end of key stage 3. This is so pupils are fully equipped with

the knowledge and skills to cope with the curriculum demands at key stage 4.

- Teachers adapt learning tasks to make them more accessible for pupils with SEND. They adopt generic approaches to improve pupils' literacy skills. However, these are sometimes not specific enough to address the needs of those with very poor reading skills. As a result, some pupils are not able to access the curriculum fully. Leaders need to make sure that the weakest readers receive specific reading interventions that help them catch up faster.
- In relation to some subjects, leaders do not take into enough consideration the key stage 2 curriculum or Year 7 pupils' prior achievements. This means that sometimes pupils spend too much time going over knowledge that they have already acquired at primary school. Leaders should ensure that key stage 2 to 3 transition arrangements take more account of pupils' previous learning.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 16–17 March 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	138059
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10111741
Type of school	Other secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	798
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ammo Talwar
Headteacher	Sofia Darr
Website	http://www.rockwood-academy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	16–17 March 2016

Information about this school

- The school is part of a group of six schools in the CORE Education Trust.
- This school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school is currently expanding. A new £14 million building is currently being constructed. While building work takes place, most of the Year 7 pupils are housed at Nansen Primary School, across the road from the main school building.

Information about this inspection

- Subjects considered as part of this inspection were science, mathematics, geography and modern foreign languages. We carried out lesson visits to see these subjects being taught and looked at pupils' work. We talked to pupils about their work. We spoke to teachers who taught these subjects and held discussions with subject leaders.
- We explored safeguarding arrangements by reviewing safeguarding records, checking the safety of the school site, talking to staff and pupils about how they keep safe and checking the school's single central record. We met with the school's designated safeguarding lead and deputy designated safeguarding lead.
- We met with the headteacher, two deputy headteachers, assistant headteachers and subject leaders. We also met with one trustee and members of the local governing

body, including the chair.

- We considered 36 responses to Ofsted’s staff survey and seven responses to the Ofsted pupil survey. There were insufficient responses to consider parents’ views from Ofsted’s Parent View. There was one free-text comment from a parent. We also took into account two telephone conversations with parents.

Inspection team

Tim Hill, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Natasha Lloyd

Ofsted Inspector

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