

Inspection of John Madejski Academy

125 Hartland Road, Reading, Berkshire RG2 8AF

Inspection dates:

7–8 January 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

The academy is improving because teachers' expectations of pupils in all year groups are rising. Many pupils and parents agree that the school is better than in the past. Pupils feel safe and well supported. Pupils and staff get along well together and there is a friendly feeling to the school. Bullying does not happen very often. Pupils say they trust staff to deal with it if it does.

School leaders want pupils across the school to achieve as well as they can. However, this is dependent on which teachers pupils get. Some teachers are more skilled and ambitious for their pupils than others. Not all teachers have the subject-specific knowledge they need to help pupils understand the world around them. Mostly, lessons are calm and orderly. Pupils say that behaviour is better, but there are still occasions when learning is disrupted.

Pupils value the enrichment programme where they can try new things such as learning Chinese or doing street art. Pupils on the 'elite' sports programme appreciate the opportunities they have to develop into high-level athletes. One parent said: 'My child's confidence has grown and both his academic and sports progress shows.'

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

The principal is determined and ambitious for the school. The trust, governors and staff support her vision. Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel listened to and well supported. Some key leaders are very new in their roles. They have not yet had the time to make a positive difference to the quality of teaching.

Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 study a broad range of subjects. Leaders have not provided some subjects, such as music and design technology, with enough time on the timetable. Teachers in these subjects lack the subject-specific expertise to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. Leaders know this and have plans in place to make it better.

Leaders have thought carefully about the important knowledge that pupils should learn. They have drawn up detailed plans about what to teach and in which order to teach it. Many teachers in subjects such as English, geography, science and physical education ensure that pupils learn more and remember more. However, not all teachers across the school are skilled enough in doing this. Sometimes this leads to pupils losing focus and switching off in lessons. As a result, some pupils are not achieving as well as they could, particularly those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Staff are keen to encourage pupils to read more. New strategies are in place such as older pupils ('heroes') working with younger ones to develop their reading skills. Although it is early days, pupils are developing better reading habits.

Leaders have worked hard and been successful in raising attendance across the school. There is more to do to make sure boys, disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEND come to school more regularly.

LIFEE lessons (literate, informed, financially savvy, emotionally intelligent, enterprising young people) and the tutor programme include topics about the wider world and adult life. For example, during the inspection, Year 10 pupils were discussing mental health issues and Year 7 shared their ideas about climate change. Some tutors' skills and knowledge are stronger than those of others. As a result, pupils' learning in these areas varies too much.

Leaders work hard to provide pupils with chances to broaden their horizons, raise their aspirations and learn new skills. For example, there are strong links with local engineering companies, so pupils learn about careers in that field. The newly formed combined cadet force is helping participants to develop leadership and organisational skills.

Sixth-form students achieve well, and standards are rising. Many who retake GCSE subjects are successful. Students enjoy their studies, attend regularly and work very well together. There is a wide range of courses on offer, with the majority choosing the 'elite' sports programmes. Students on these courses are particularly well supported. All students receive valuable advice and guidance about their next steps. They are successful in gaining places at universities or being offered apprenticeships or employment. Currently, students do not have sufficient opportunities to experience the world of work. Leaders have plans to address this. The programme to support the development of sixth-form students' wider skills is not meeting all their needs well enough.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

School leaders, governors and staff are thoroughly trained in how to keep pupils safe. They understand the risks that pupils can face. They know pupils well and act appropriately if a pupil is at risk. Leaders work well with a range of other agencies and are always looking for new ways to support pupils in need.

The school teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe, both online and in the community. For example, key stage 3 pupils recently watched a play about the danger of county lines drug trafficking. Pupils know who to go to if they have a problem.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- While all the subjects of the national curriculum in key stage 3 are offered, music and design technology do not have enough time on the timetable for pupils to

build their knowledge and skills sufficiently. Leaders should deliver on their plans to broaden the curriculum at key stage 3 further and develop teachers' subject knowledge in these subjects.

- Leaders' curriculum planning is well thought out. The delivery of those plans is variable across the curriculum. In some cases, this is due to new subject leaders who have not yet had time to improve the quality of teaching in their departments or hold teachers to account. Senior leaders should ensure that subject leaders are supported and challenged to raise standards in their curriculum area.
- Pupils' personal development would benefit from tutors having more training in delivering the LIFEE programme. Leaders should build on recent curriculum enhancements to improve the consistency of pupils' experience in lessons, within and across subjects, and ensure the consistent delivery of the LIFEE programme.
- Pupils who have SEND are not making enough progress through the curriculum. While many pupils with SEND benefit from targeted interventions, leaders should improve the consistency of teaching, so it better meets the needs of SEND pupils in the classroom across subjects.
- Recent strategies to improve attendance have been successful. Leaders should ensure that attendance continues to improve for all pupils by focusing on boys, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEND.
- Leaders should ensure that they offer sixth-form students more opportunities to experience the world of work. They should also ensure that there is a coherent and effective programme for students' personal development across all pathways, so that students have a better understanding of life in modern Britain.

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 are the school and you are 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	130247
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	10111414
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	612
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	75
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Nick Capstick
Principal	Camilla Thornalley
Website	www.johnmadejskiacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The current headteacher joined the school as interim principal in October 2018 and her appointment was made permanent in April 2019.
- Since February 2018, the school has been a member of the White Horse Federation. The trust supports primary, secondary and special schools in Oxfordshire, Swindon, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. John Madejski Academy is the first school in Berkshire to join.
- A very small number of pupils in key stage 4 attend lessons at Reading College and Berkshire Agricultural College. A small number of pupils attend the local authority's pupil referral unit on a short-term basis.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with the principal and vice-principals. The lead inspector had a meeting with the vice-chair of governors and two other members of the local governing board. She also had a meeting with the regional director and chief executive officer of the academy trust.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: English, science, geography, performing arts and physical education. For each of these subjects, we had a meeting with the subject leader to look at their curriculum plans, visited several lessons with leaders, talked to pupils about their work, looked at those pupils' books and talked to the teachers whose classes we had visited. We also visited lessons in languages, mathematics, business administration and STEM (science, technology engineering and mathematics).
- In order to inspect safeguarding, we looked at the school's records of checks on staff, the school's safeguarding policy and the way leaders record any concerns about pupils. We held meetings with the school's designated safeguarding lead and pastoral staff. We spoke to pupils and staff to get their views on safeguarding.
- An inspector telephoned the alternative providers used by the school.
- We spoke with pupils in meetings and around the school site.
- We spoke with a wide range of staff, including teachers and support staff.
- We looked at the 36 responses from the staff questionnaire and the 19 responses to the pupil questionnaire. We also considered the 38 responses to Ofsted's Parent View, including 38 free-text comments.

Inspection team

Paula Sargent, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Cartwright	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Foster	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Fry	Ofsted Inspector

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