

Inspection of a good school: Roebuck Academy

St Margarets, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG2 8RG

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 September 2021

Outcome

Roebuck Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy, safe and well cared for at Roebuck Academy. This includes children who go to the Nursery. There is a welcoming environment as pupils step through the door. Corridors are full of stimulating displays that promote a love for reading and a curiosity for learning.

Pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations. Pupils behave very well in lessons. They listen attentively to their teachers and work and play happily together. Well-established routines ensure that the atmosphere in class and around the school is calm and purposeful.

The 'dreamcatcher assembly' programme is a well-known feature of school life for pupils. They relish the chance to meet and ask questions of speakers from many walks of life. Pupils have enjoyed presentations from the fire and police services, an Olympic athlete, a train driver, and a nurse. These opportunities contribute effectively towards developing pupils' personal development.

Pupils say that bullying and discrimination are rare occurrences and that it is not tolerated at the school. Pupils know who to talk to, if worried. They are confident that teachers deal with incidents when and if they happen. Staff prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education.

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

Leaders have worked hard to develop a high-quality curriculum. They have thought carefully about what pupils need to learn as they move through the school. Leaders organise what pupils will learn in a logical order. Pupils talk confidently about what they have learned and know in a range of subjects. They understand the importance of being able to explain their answers. However, subject plans such as mathematics are well established in their implementation compared to newer subject plans such as religious

education (RE). Where this is the case, teachers' checking of what pupils know and can do is less embedded.

Leaders have prioritised reading in school. Children begin to learn the sounds that letters make as soon as they join Nursery. Phonics sessions are fun and purposeful. Leaders and staff know which sounds they expect pupils to know and by when. Teachers know their pupils well and match books accurately to pupils' prior learning and what they need to know next. Pupils quickly learn to read and understand what they are reading. Those pupils who fall behind get the help they need to be more confident readers. The themed reading corner in each classroom, vibrant corridors lined with fictional characters and enchanting library encourage pupils to develop a love of reading from a very early age.

Children get off to a strong start to their education in early years. They learn, share and play together happily. The curriculum across all areas of learning is well thought through. Staff also plan lots of motivating and stimulating learning experiences to capture children's imagination. Consequently, children are well prepared for Year 1.

Staff cater well for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders have the same high expectations for these pupils as they do for others. Pupils are encouraged to develop their independence. These pupils are fully included in the school's activities and well supported to access the curriculum.

Leaders are committed to pupils' personal development. Pupils are encouraged to celebrate success and build on setbacks and mistakes to develop resilience. Staff further enrich pupils' time in school with memorable trips out to places of interest and provide a wealth of extra-curricular opportunities.

Behaviour in class is very good. Pupils pay close attention to the teacher and work hard when given activities to do. These positive attitudes, nurtured from the start, continue all the way through to Year 6.

The school is well led and managed. Staff support the headteacher and her vision for continued school improvement. They value the high-quality training they receive. Staff feel valued and enjoy working at the school. Leaders have ensured that staff well-being and workload implications are fully considered.

Trustees and governors provide effective support and challenge to leaders. Even though the school is good, they are always looking for ways to further develop. They listen to ideas from everyone in the school community. There is a relentless drive to ensure that all pupils achieve highly.

Leaders provide parents with advice, strategies and workshops to help their children at home. Parents value the school. One parent, summing up the views of many, commented, 'I believe the staff know my children well and are able to guide them with their learning, so they work to the best of their abilities'. Pupils attend regularly and take great pride in their uniform.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff know the pupils well and so are able to spot any concerns straight away and act upon them. They seek advice and support from external agencies quickly where needed. Leaders follow up referrals to ensure they get the help they need. All staff receive appropriate training for safeguarding, including sexual harassment, sexual abuse and sexual violence.

The school carries out all the required recruitment checks to ensure that anyone working at the school, or visiting, is safe to work with children. Pupils know how to stay safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have carefully planned a structured and coherent curriculum. Work in the majority of subjects is well established. However, newer subject plans, such as RE, are at an earlier stage of implementation than others and so are yet to show how they support pupils to progress as well. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum for all subjects is firmly embedded so that pupils' knowledge in all subjects is of the same high standard.
- Where there are newer subject plans in place, teachers are in an earlier stage of developing an understanding of what pupils know and can do. Leaders should continue to develop and embed assessment opportunities in newer subject plans, so that pupils' next steps of learning can be carefully chosen and support them to progress well in the curriculum.

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 or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Roebuck Primary School and Nursery to be good in January 2015.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	144419
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10200455
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	454
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andrew Simmons
Headteacher	Lynsey Young
Website	www.roebuck.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up her position in September 2017.
- The school has been part of The Hart Schools Trust since 1 July 2017.
- The school uses DSPL2, The Willow Centre, based at Mobbsbury Way, Stevenage SG2 0HL.

Information about this inspection

- This as the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and other school staff. A meeting was also held with the chair and members of the governing body, and the managing director of The Hart Schools Trust. The inspector held informal and formal discussions with many pupils and observed interactions during social times. The inspector also spoke to a representative from the local authority by telephone and a representative of The Willow Centre in Stevenage.

- The inspector considered the following subjects in depth as part of the inspection: reading and phonics, mathematics and RE.
- The inspector completed an evaluation of curriculum planning, visited lessons, scrutinised pupils' work, listened to pupils read, held discussions with subject leaders, and held discussions with pupils about their learning in these subjects.
- A range of documents were examined, including the school's self-evaluation.
- The inspector examined the single central record of checks on the suitability of adults to work with pupils.
- The inspector took account of 45 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The inspector also considered 39 free-text responses from parents.

Inspection team

Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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