

Inspection of a good school: Ickniel High School

Riddy Lane, Luton, Bedfordshire LU3 2AH

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 November 2021

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

At Ickniel High School, pupils are polite, respectful and enthusiastic. Around school, they behave in mature ways. Their lessons are calm and orderly, which creates a positive environment for them to learn in.

Pupils feel safe at school. They are confident to talk about their concerns and worries, including about bullying, to leaders. However, they feel that some teachers will not act as quickly or be as helpful as leaders are. Pupils of different backgrounds feel included. They say 'everyone's welcome' at school.

Pupils appreciate the sporting, artistic and musical opportunities they have. They learn about the visual arts all the way through their time at school. Leaders promote pupils' cultural development well. Pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are supported extremely well to think about the careers that are right for them.

Some pupils, including pupils with SEND, struggle with their learning because teachers introduce more complicated tasks, such as exam practice, too early. Pupils do not know enough of the different elements of subjects before they are expected to apply their knowledge.

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

There is a strong culture of achievement. Leaders plan for all pupils to finish their education having studied a broad range of subjects, including an arts subject and religious education (RE). Leaders have adapted the curriculum offer so that there are no barriers to pupils choosing the English Baccalaureate selection of subjects. As a result, the

number of pupils choosing this combination has increased from over a third of pupils to well over a half.

In Years 7, 8 and 9, teachers' assessments of pupils' understanding focus on exam techniques and skills rather than on the broad range of content that pupils need to learn. Too often, pupils attempt tasks which require them to use a range of information, some of which they have not been taught. In some cases, teachers expect pupils to learn complex ideas without explaining them in enough detail. Pupils who need the most support are disadvantaged by this approach. They do not learn as well as they should in lessons.

Leaders act quickly to support weaker readers. They identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and give pupils specific books that expand their vocabulary. Teachers across the school reinforce this in lessons effectively, by focusing on and explaining key words.

Pupils with SEND who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan) receive support that is well matched to their needs. However, there is more to do to support pupils with SEND who do not have an EHC plan, including checking how effectively teachers adapt their lessons for these pupils' needs. Leaders are aware of this issue and have begun to investigate what needs to be improved. This is at an early stage and has not yielded significant improvements at this stage.

Leaders organise information events with sign language interpreters and language translators. This allows parents and carers to work with the school to help prepare pupils with SEND for their next steps in their lives.

Leaders have high expectations of behaviour, and pupils rise to them. Lessons take place without disruption. Leaders promote the values of companionship and loyalty. Pupils know that they can get the help they need from pastoral support staff and year-group leaders. They think that leaders are effective at putting a stop to poor behaviour and bullying. However, pupils are concerned that some classroom teachers are less effective at responding to their concerns.

From the very start of school, all pupils benefit from a well-sequenced careers programme. This includes, for example, meeting different professionals. The programme gives pupils opportunities to learn extensively about a wide range of jobs and professions. They receive the help they need to work out their career aspirations.

Leaders develop the expertise of staff to help them understand which teaching approaches will help pupils remember the curriculum. Staff value the actions that leaders have taken to reduce workload and to help them concentrate on activities that will benefit pupils the most. Leaders are considerate of the needs of their staff.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspectors agreed that the use of assessment, the effectiveness of support for pupils with SEND who do not have an EHC plan, and the consistency of staff responses to pupils' concerns, may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

School systems around safeguarding are thorough. Staff log incidents or concerns, which leaders of safeguarding follow up in a timely way. Leaders secure early help for vulnerable pupils. They use their knowledge of external agencies to push for help when they are not satisfied that pupils' needs are being met. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including online.

Staff are trained regularly in safeguarding. Leaders check what staff have learned. Leaders ensure that training covers a range of risks, including the risks in the local community. Leaders and managers have made the necessary recruitment checks on staff.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Subjects, especially core subjects, focus on examination assessment objectives and skills too early, too often, before pupils have had the opportunity to learn enough subject content. This means that those pupils who most need to be secure in crucial component knowledge, such as pupils with SEND, struggle unnecessarily to complete complex tasks. Leaders should ensure that subject teachers teach the broad subject content that pupils need.
- Pupils perceive that leaders' policy for promoting positive behaviour, including what to do if bullying occurs, is applied by some staff less well than others. This means that pupils experience inconsistency between the quick actions of pastoral and senior leaders, who secure effective support for pupils and put a stop to bullying, and slower responses from some teachers. Leaders should ensure that all members of staff implement the positive behaviour policy well.

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 evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2013.

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	137679
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	10199983
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1456
Appropriate authority	The trust board
Chair of governing body	Steve Blake
Headteacher	John Noble
Website	http://www.icknield.beds.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 September 2016

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average sized secondary school.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND. It provides education for pupils with hearing impairments. The type of language system used is British Sign Language.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider, the Avenue Centre for Education, and one unregistered alternative provider, Embrace and Encourage Education, to deliver education to some pupils, some of the time.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the Headteacher, senior leaders, the designated safeguarding lead, and the leader with responsibility for SEND. Inspectors also met a member of the governing body.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: art and design, English, geography, mathematics and RE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at the curriculum provision for reading.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils, staff, leaders, managers and governors about the school and its safeguarding arrangements. Inspectors looked at the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks and at a range of pupils' safeguarding files.
- Inspectors looked at 38 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, which included 24 free-text responses submitted during the inspection. The lead inspector also looked at 58 responses to the staff survey and 288 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Richard Kueh, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Georgina Atkinson

Ofsted Inspector

Shan Oswald

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates:
<http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2021