

Inspection of a good school: Retford Oaks Academy

Babworth Road, Retford, Nottinghamshire DN22 7NJ

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 May 2022

Outcome

Retford Oaks Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to be part of Retford Oaks Academy. They know that staff will go 'above and beyond' to keep them safe. Pupils are encouraged to be 'dedicated to their learning' and to work hard and do well during lessons. The school's vision of 'we empower, we respect and we care' is part of pupils' daily life at school. Pupils know and understand that this vision will help them grow in confidence. They become well-rounded young people.

Bullying is not tolerated at the school. Pupils say that when it happens, staff take it seriously and act swiftly to resolve any issues. Pupils are taught what bullying is and know how to report any concerns. The school's 'STOP' programme has ensured that pupils feel happy at the school. Most parents and carers agree that their children are safe at school.

The behaviour of most pupils is good. Pupils are friendly and polite to each other. In lessons, pupils respond positively to their learning. Pupils behave well. Teachers deal effectively with any low-level disruption to learning. The majority of pupils enjoy their lessons. They appreciate the many opportunities that the school offers them, including trips. Pupils say that the school is 'hardworking' in its approach to helping them to develop personally and academically. Students in the sixth form appreciate the effective help and support they receive to prepare them for the next stage of their education, training or employment.

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

Leaders and governors have high ambitions for pupils. They want all pupils to be completely engaged in their learning. Leaders have designed the curriculum carefully. They think carefully about providing an appropriate curriculum for all pupils. For instance, the school has made links with the NHS. Consequently, pupils and students are given opportunities to access learning that will prepare them for careers in childcare or health and social care.

Subject leaders are refining their curriculum plans so that teachers can deliver a curriculum to ensure that the needs of all pupils are being met. In most subjects, leaders have made sure that new learning builds on what pupils have learned previously and supports what comes next. Pupils enjoy the opportunities to know more about a subject beyond what they learn in the classroom. Pupils interviewed remember fondly their trip to Stratford-upon-Avon to learn about Shakespeare's life. Curriculum implementation is improving in mathematics. This is due to effective support provided by the leaders of the Diverse Academies Trust.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. In most subjects, they question pupils about their learning to check on their understanding as well as to challenge their thinking. In stronger subjects, such as English and science, teachers use the strategy of 'challenge, support and add' effectively. Pupils learn to give well-considered answers. Leaders are ensuring that support is in place so that this stronger practice is consistent across the school.

The quality of pupils' work shows that most pupils are able to acquire the intended learning. Pupils understand how assessments help them to know and remember more of what is taught. Most pupils receive work that is well sequenced and builds on their prior learning. However, some pupils are capable of being challenged so that they make links with other aspects of learning in different subjects.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) follow the same curriculum as other pupils. While some pupils with SEND are recalling what they have been taught, the support for others is inconsistent. Some staff do not adapt or modify the curriculum precisely enough so that these pupils can learn as well as their peers. Leaders are developing the professional development programme for staff with the intention that pupils with SEND consistently receive the effective support they need.

Students in the sixth form are challenged to achieve their full potential. Students say that they are well supported with their studies. One student summed up the views of many by saying, 'Teachers know you and know how to guide and support you; because of this, you want to be dedicated to your learning.' The proportion of students moving on to university or high-level apprenticeships is increasing.

Pupils say that behaviour is generally good across the school. Instances of poor behaviour in lessons are challenged appropriately by staff, and the majority of pupils respond positively. Pupils and students in the sixth form say that sometimes, behaviour is less good during break- and lunchtimes. Leaders recognise this. They, together with staff, are working to improve standards of behaviour so that all pupils know how to self-regulate during unstructured times.

Leaders are proud of the wider development opportunities the school offers. Pupils appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as sports clubs, performing arts and charitable challenges. Pupils say that they welcome these clubs and enjoy attending them. They value the effort staff put into running activities and said that they loved the special 'Reward Day'.

Leaders are mindful of staff workload and well-being. Staff say that they feel valued and appreciated. One member of staff summed up the views of many in saying, 'It is a wonderful place to work.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of vigilance at the school. Staff receive high-quality training in safeguarding. They receive regular updates from experienced safeguarding leaders. Staff report their concerns about pupils. Leaders keep accurate records. They use this information to ensure that pupils get the help that they need. Leaders act quickly to involve other agencies. They make sure that pupils at risk of harm receive the expert support they need. The school has appropriate procedures in place to manage allegations. Leaders check the alternative providers that the school uses.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils' behaviour around the school is not always to the same standard as it is during lessons. A few pupils who expressed a view feel that behaviour during social times needs to improve. Leaders should ensure that all pupils understand the importance of good behaviour, so that they demonstrate the same high levels of self-control in unstructured times, thus actively supporting the well-being of other pupils.
- Leaders are ambitious for pupils with SEND. However, the support these pupils receive across all subjects is inconsistent. The variability means these a few pupils' needs are not being met, resulting in gaps in their knowledge. Leaders must ensure that all teachers have the knowledge and skills they need to help these pupils to learn the intended curriculum.
- The intent and implementation of the curriculum are not fully effective in every subject. In a few subjects, pupils are not always provided with activities that can accelerate their learning and deepen their understanding. Leaders should ensure that curriculum plans and the delivery of the curriculum are equally ambitious in all subjects, so that all pupils know and remember more of what is taught.

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 a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2017.

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	137117
Local authority	Nottinghamshire County Council
Inspection number	10227944
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
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	1,021
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	101
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Andrew Knight
Principal	Christopher West
Website	www.retfordoaks-ac.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 and 7 June 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Diverse Academies Trust, a multi-academy trust.
- The school uses six alternative providers that are registered.
- The school uses five unregistered alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal, the executive principal and other members of the senior leadership team. Meetings were held with subject leaders and the trust's lead coordinator for pupils with special educational needs.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, history, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with support staff, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- An inspector contacted the alternative education providers by telephone.
- An inspector met with school leaders responsible for literacy and reading. Pupils were observed reading in lessons and small groups.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the local governing body and of the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils and staff, formally and informally, around the school site.
- Inspectors took note of the responses received to Ofsted Parent View. They considered the results of the Ofsted staff and pupil questionnaires.
- Inspectors considered a wide variety of school documents, including the school development plan, policies and record-keeping for behaviour management, and bullying logs.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the relevant school policies, scrutinised the single central record, checked the school's procedures for the safe recruitment of staff and met with the designated safeguarding lead.

Inspection team

Sally Wicken, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Teresa Roche

Ofsted Inspector

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