

Inspection of a good school: Isca

Earl Richards Road South, Exeter, Devon EX2 6AP

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 June 2022

Outcome

Isca continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Isca is a calm and purposeful place in which to learn. Staff expect pupils to show SPARK: to be safe, prepared, actively engaged, respectful and kind. Most pupils are keen to meet these expectations.

Those from all backgrounds feel welcome and included at Isca. Pupils understand some of the challenges facing those who are different from them. They learn about different faiths and cultures and the need for tolerance.

Pupils behave well in lessons. They are calm when moving around the school and are punctual to lessons. Relationships with staff are positive and respectful. Few pupils have concerns about bullying. Some pupils say that not all staff deal with bullying incidents as well as they could. Most say staff deal with bullying well if it happens.

Pupils have a voice in school life. Leaders listen to their views and act upon them. For example, the enrichment curriculum will be more varied next year in response to pupils' views. There is an active student council, anti-bullying ambassadors, student leaders and an LGBTQ+ group. Pupils work with staff to select some of the books that they read with their tutors.

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

All pupils follow an ambitious and rigorous curriculum. Most pupils follow qualifications in the academic subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate. Pupils can also study a range of other subjects, including some that are vocational. Reading is a high priority for leaders. The guided reading programme is increasing pupils' literacy and vocabulary. Extra support helps those who are not fluent to become more confident readers.

Staff know how to help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) with their learning. Pupils are involved in reviewing what support they most value. However, some parents of pupils with SEND do not feel their child gets the support they need.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They enthusiastically share what they know. Pupils often revisit what they have already learned so that they do not forget it. Teachers usually check accurately whether pupils have understood the knowledge they have been taught. However, some gaps in pupils' learning are not routinely identified and so they sometimes persist.

Leaders ensure that well-established routines underpin all lessons. Pupils learn how to conduct themselves in lesson. They know what is expected and respond promptly to instructions. Behaviour systems are clear. Pupils who have been removed from lessons for causing disruption continue with the same learning as their peers so that they do not fall behind.

Leaders support pupils' wider personal development well. For example, all pupils learn first aid and take part in voluntary work in the community. Many pupils enjoy a wide range of clubs, including sports, music, drama and outdoor education. Leaders track attendance at these clubs so that they can encourage all pupils to take part. As a result, all pupils with SEND or who are disadvantaged now take part in extra-curricular activities. Careers education takes place from Year 7 onwards. Pupils understand their future options, including routes to apprenticeships and university.

Leaders know the school well. They are reflective and use the information they gather to continue to improve the school. Trustees and the local governing body work together to make sure that the school is led well. Staff value the training that leaders provide. Most staff say that leaders are considerate of their workloads. Support provided by the multi-academy trust helps reduce workload for staff, including those with leadership roles.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are vigilant about the safety and welfare of pupils. Training helps them understand the possible signs of harm. Leaders take prompt action when concerns are reported. Safeguarding staff work tenaciously to secure the help that pupils need. Leaders have appointed extra staff to provide additional support to pupils and their families.

Pupils learn how to stay safe. They know about the potential risks to them, including those online. Most pupils say they know who to talk to if they are worried about something.

Leaders carry out suitable checks to make sure that the staff they appoint are suitable.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not always check that all pupils have learned what was intended. Consequently, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge. Leaders need to ensure that checks on learning identify gaps for all pupils so that these can be closed.
- Some parents of pupils with SEND do not feel that their child is well supported. This means they are not satisfied with the actions of the school. Leaders need to improve communication with parents so that they have greater confidence in the support that the school provides.

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 first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 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 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	139682
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10206858
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1015
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andrew Mulcock
Headteacher	Aimee Mitchell
Website	www.iscaexeter.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 and 19 October 2016

Information about this school

- The school uses three registered alternative providers.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative providers.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, trustees, governors and staff from the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, modern foreign languages and history. For each deep dive inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, met teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also visited lessons in other subjects including English, geography, art and design technology.

- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead, examined school records and discussed safeguarding cases.
- Inspectors met with staff to discuss support for pupils with special education needs.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the views of staff and pupils in Ofsted's online survey.

Inspection team

Sarah Favager-Dalton, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

James Oldham

Her Majesty's Inspector

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