

# Inspection of Rushden Academy

Hayway, Rushden, Northamptonshire NN10 6AG

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Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2022

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

There are strong positive relationships between staff and pupils at this school. Pupils enjoy attending and staff are proud to work at the school. Many parents and carers would recommend the school. There is a clear focus on developing pupils as individuals as well as educating them. As one parent put it, 'Teachers are focused on getting the best out of pupils.'

All members of this school community are a part of what is commonly known as 'Team Rushden'. This team encompasses a caring ethos, shared values and high expectations, which exude throughout the school. Pupils feel safe and happy in this environment.

Pupils know what bullying is. Pupils said bullying does not happen often and when it does adults deal with it effectively. Pupils are confident in reporting poor behaviour, such as bullying.

Pupils show positive attitudes to learning. They receive a good quality of education. Pupils enjoy a range of extra-curricular activities. Many are enthusiastic and proud to be a part of the highly anticipated school productions.

Students agree that the sixth form is a positive environment which they really value. They appreciate the support they get from mentors and benefit from the expert subject knowledge of their teachers.

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

Leaders have re-designed the curriculum, so that it is ambitious for all pupils. Teachers have a clear understanding of what pupils should learn and when. This helps pupils build on what they already know. For example, in art, pupils focus on becoming more proficient in shape and line before moving on to more complex drawing. This gives pupils the building blocks to become better artists.

Pupils study a broad range of subjects. More pupils are studying a modern foreign language than in previous years. However, the curriculum for design and technology, and in particular food and nutrition, is not as sufficiently well developed as all other subjects. Leaders have clear plans to address this area of the curriculum.

Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge. Leaders have trained teachers to use what are commonly known as the 'Rushden teaching and learning foundations'. This reminds teachers to present ideas in a way which does not overload pupils with too much information. This helps pupils achieve in lessons. There are still a few occasions when some teachers do not check that all pupils have secured important knowledge well enough before the lesson moves on. As a result, on occasions a small number of pupils do not learn as well as they should.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well in lessons. Teachers know the needs of pupils with SEND. Teachers help these pupils overcome any barriers to learning, so that they can achieve as well as other pupils. The 'Hub' is an environment in which pupils can continue learning when they find attending lessons difficult.

Leaders have prioritised reading. There is time given in the curriculum, so that pupils can read for pleasure. Specialist teachers of reading help those pupils who are at the early stages of reading to become better readers. This helps these pupils access the full curriculum. The library is a vibrant environment and well used by many pupils. Pupils in the role of library monitor support the effective running of the library. Pupils at the school continue to develop a love for reading.

Students in the sixth form undertake a comprehensive programme of study. There is a broad approach to preparing them for their next steps. This includes visits to universities, engagement with employers, work experience and the provision of information about apprenticeships. Students take on roles such as 'subject gurus' and 'buddy readers'. This allows them to integrate with pupils from key stage 3 and 4. Staff, students and younger pupils all benefit from this approach.

The curriculum ensures that pupils learn about healthy relationships and British values. The well-established 'ethos project' supports pupils' personal development, including their spiritual development. Leaders have invested in a strategy for developing pupils' strength of character. This is helping pupils to become resilient and independent.

The behaviour in and around school is calm. The expectations of behaviour and sanctions for poor behaviour are commonly understood through the 'ask, move, remove' system. As a result, pupils behave well in lessons. Attendance for most pupils is high. However, there are a small number of pupils who have high levels of persistent absence. These pupils are not benefiting from the education that the school is providing.

Leaders ensure an inclusive culture in which all pupils and staff are respected. Leaders engage well with staff. Staff feel well supported in managing their workload.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders train staff to be both knowledgeable and vigilant about safeguarding issues. Staff record and report any concerns, including changes in a pupil's demeanour, as they know this could be a sign that a pupil is at risk.

Safeguarding leaders make sure that the most vulnerable pupils get the support they need. Safeguarding leaders work in partnership with external agencies to protect these pupils.

Pupils are confident and know who to speak to if they have a concern or a worry. They know these adults will be able to help.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum in design and technology, in particular food and nutrition, is as well developed as all other areas of the curriculum. Pupils in key stage 3 do not benefit from learning about this as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that their plans to develop this part of the curriculum are implemented swiftly.
- On occasions, some teachers do not check well enough that all pupils have secured the knowledge they need to build on it further. A minority of pupils in a few lessons do not learn as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that all teachers check that all pupils have secured the most important knowledge.
- There are a small number of pupils that miss too much education through persistent absence. Leaders must continue to work with parents to ensure these pupils attend school more regularly, so that they benefit from the education the school is providing.

## 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.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	146209
<b>Local authority</b>	North Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10241314
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	844
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	104
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Christopher Watt
<b>Principal</b>	Ben Baines
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.rushden-academy.net">www.rushden-academy.net</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the Tove Learning Trust.
- A new principal took up his substantive role in September 2022.
- The school uses three registered providers of alternative provision.
- The school's sixth-form curriculum is delivered as part of a consortium arrangement with two other local schools: Huxlow Academy and the Ferrers School. The partnership is known as The East Northamptonshire College (TENC).
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the provider received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the provider and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the provider.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in art and design, mathematics, English and science. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also visited a range of lessons in other subjects. For these subjects, they looked at pupils' work and subject plans, and spoke to pupils.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for: behaviour; personal development; reading; the sixth form; looked after children; the use of the pupil premium funding and the provision for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from key stages 3, 4 and 5.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader to discuss the actions taken to keep pupils safe. He reviewed a range of documents, including the school's single central record.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan.
- An inspector met with early career teachers and mentors.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the trust and the chief executive officer.
- The lead inspector met with members of the local governing body, including the chair.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and considered the results of the Ofsted staff and pupil questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Rakesh Patel, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Chris Stevens	His Majesty's Inspector
Imtiaz Patel	Ofsted Inspector
Claire Shepherd	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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