

# Inspection of Ryecroft CofE Middle School

Ashbourne Road, Rocester, Staffordshire ST14 5PB

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Inspection dates:

14 and 15 September 2022

## **Outcome**

Ryecroft CofE Middle School continues to be a good school.

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

Ryecroft CofE Middle School has a strong Christian ethos and character. Pupils embrace the school's values of humility, inspiration, perseverance and trust. They learn to listen to each other, respect one another and show kindness to all.

Staff know the pupils well and have high expectations of them. The majority of pupils work hard in lessons and focus on their learning. They take pride in their work and can confidently ask for help when they need it.

Pupils feel happy and safe at this school. They know that they will be listened to and that their opinions matter. There are clear routines in place for managing behaviour. Nearly all pupils meet the high expectations that leaders have for how they should behave. Bullying is rare. It is dealt with quickly and effectively when it does happen.

The curriculum is enhanced by many trips, visits and in-school special events. A wide range of planned activities are available to pupils at lunchtimes and after school. These clubs are well attended by pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

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

Leaders' primary aim is that all pupils benefit from an ambitious curriculum. To this end, they have put detailed curriculum planning in place for each subject. This planning highlights the sequences in which pupils should learn important knowledge. Some of this curriculum planning has only recently been put in place, and it is too early to evaluate its long-term success.

Pupils are able to explain how previous learning enables them to complete their current work. Work in books from previous years also shows how pupils' work is organised in well-connected ways over time. However, the way in which some teachers implement the curriculum means that work is not always well sequenced. In some cases, it does not

follow logically from what went before. This means that pupils get confused and do not learn and remember all that they should.

Pupils with SEND learn the same curriculum as everyone else. Leaders provide teachers with detailed and up-to-date information about the additional learning needs of individual pupils, which helps them to know how best to meet the pupils' needs

Assessment is generally used well, and there are a number of assessment points in different subjects during the school year. Most of the time, teachers know where pupils are in their learning and adjust lessons to address any gaps in their knowledge. However, in some cases, staff do not check carefully enough what pupils know and remember. This means that they press on with some new learning before pupils are ready for it.

Leaders understand the importance of teaching pupils to read and to enjoy reading. They have put an effective reading scheme in place across both key stages. If pupils need extra support, leaders make sure they get it. Pupils have many opportunities to read in school and enjoy books. During this inspection, they talked enthusiastically to inspectors about their progress and the improvements they had made.

Staff have high expectations for behaviour in the school, which are understood by all pupils. Generally, behaviour in and outside the classroom is of a high standard. Occasionally, a minority of pupils show low-level negative behaviours and have to be reminded to focus on their learning.

The curriculum goes beyond the classroom. Pupils are offered many leadership opportunities, and they value the school's 'student voice'. There are more than 30 very popular lunchtime and after-school activities every week. Careers education is strong and goes beyond national expectations by extending it to all year groups.

The school is well supported by the trust, especially with regard to training and curriculum development. Staff have confidence in leaders, who make every effort to make them feel valued and appreciated. They make sure that staff have a reasonable workload and a manageable work-life balance.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and updates and know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil. Leaders follow up on concerns. They work well with families and external agencies to protect pupils who may be at risk of harm.

Pupils know who to go to if they are worried or concerned. They know that they will be listened to and taken seriously. They are taught about dangers and risks, including how to stay safe online.

All the correct checks on adults are carried out and recorded.

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

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

- The way some teachers implement the curriculum means that work is not always well sequenced. This means that some pupils get confused and do not learn and remember all that they should. Leaders should support subject leaders and staff to ensure that the school's ambitious curriculum plans are implemented as intended across all subjects in both key stages.
- At times, staff do not check carefully enough what pupils have learned and remembered. This means that new work does not build on their current knowledge as well as it might. Leaders should support staff to make sure that assessment across the school is more consistent and is used well to plan learning.

## 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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Ryecroft CofE Middle School, to be good in November 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.

## 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	145375
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10227803
Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	199
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sidney Slater
Headteacher	Anniela Grattage
Website	<a href="http://www.ryecroft.staffs.sch.uk">www.ryecroft.staffs.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school joined Uttoxeter Learning Trust in April 2018.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been a change of headteacher. The current headteacher took up the post in April 2022.

## 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.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, other senior leaders and staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, science, geography and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector listened to a sample of pupils read in Years 6, 7 and 8.

- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to discuss the actions taken to keep pupils safe. A range of documents, including the school's single central record of checks on adults in school, were reviewed.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan.
- The lead inspector met with governors, including the chair of the governing body, the chair of the trust and the trust's chief executive officer.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire and staff questionnaire and Ofsted Parent View.

### **Inspection team**

David Buckle, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

David Hermitt

Ofsted Inspector

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