

Inspection of a good school: Acre Rigg Academy

Acre Rigg Road, Peterlee, County Durham SR8 2DU

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 June 2023

Outcome

Acre Rigg Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Acre Rigg is a caring and supportive school where pupils enjoy learning.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils in school, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils enjoy the learning that their teachers provide. They are keen to answer questions and to take part in educational activities. All adults in school work hard to make sure that pupils are given the opportunity to achieve their best.

Pupils feel safe here. They know about bullying. They say that it is uncommon in their school. However, pupils know and trust that staff will deal with bullying quickly and fairly if it did happen. Kindness is highly valued and pupils look after each other. Pupils feel happy and safe as they know they have an adult they can share any concerns with. They talk maturely about the importance of equality and of treating everyone fairly. Pupils are polite and considerate. They hold doors open for each other and greet visitors warmly.

Pupils enjoy the additional opportunities they have, including computer games, dance and eco club, visits from a local author and Captain Chemistry, who works with pupils on their scientific skills. There are opportunities for pupils to access groups in school that help them with their own emotional well-being, including a young carers' group and a bereavement group.

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

Leaders have put in place a well-ordered and well-designed curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND. The curriculum is broad and ambitious. Leaders have thought about what they want pupils to know and remember in each subject. Teachers design ongoing opportunities for pupils to practise what they have learned previously. In reading lessons, for example, pupils regularly revisit key skills to help them read new books.

Teachers have secure subject expertise. They use this to break knowledge into manageable steps for pupils. Teachers encourage pupils to explore what they are learning and develop a sense of curiosity. This is particularly seen in mathematics lessons. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils are asked to explore different ways to solve a problem and are encouraged to challenge each other about the best way to do it. When introducing new learning, teachers and teaching assistants identify when pupils need extra help, and put this into place quickly. This approach works well for all pupils, particularly those with SEND. As a result, pupils are able to build knowledge and skills across a range of subjects over time.

Teachers use a range of strategies to check whether pupils understand and remember what they have learned. Teachers use this information well to address misconceptions and to adapt their teaching. On some occasions, teachers do not move pupils' learning along quickly enough.

Throughout the school, reading is given a high priority. The teaching of reading is carefully considered. Staff are very well trained to teach reading effectively. They have identified an increased need to make sure that all pupils joining the school in Year 3 have the phonic strategies they need to be able to read fluently. Leaders have ensured that all staff are trained to teach phonics well and pupils read books that match the sound they are learning. Across the curriculum, teachers select books which add to the pupils' experiences. Many additional opportunities are provided for pupils to read in school outside of lessons, including 'Book and Bagel' time before school starts.

There are strong relationships between staff and pupils. This provides a good foundation for learning as pupils are cooperative and keen to participate in lessons. Leaders and teachers promote and celebrate positive behaviour around school. Teachers manage behaviour effectively. When poor behaviour happens, teachers help pupils to understand and put their behaviour right.

Leaders prioritise pupils' personal development and this is a strength of the school. There are strong systems in place to identify pupils who need emotional support. Staff in the personal development team are skilled at providing this help. Pupils learn how to recognise their emotional needs and how they can improve their own feelings of well-being and happiness. The school's personal development programme has been coherently planned, with the changing needs of the school's pupils firmly in mind. Pupils consistently benefit from a wide range of experiences including after-school clubs. A range of roles, including mental health warriors, enable pupils to contribute to the school community.

Governors are committed and knowledgeable. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities. Governors and leaders take staff workload and well-being seriously. Staff are very positive about how leaders engage with them to reduce the workload. They are appreciative of the support they receive from leaders both professionally and personally.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils' safety is of the utmost importance. Leaders provide thorough training and regular safeguarding updates for staff. Staff know precisely what to do if they are concerned about a pupil's safety or welfare. They follow the school's reporting procedures. When necessary, leaders work with external organisations to ensure that pupils get the specialist support that they need promptly.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding is a central part of the school's curriculum. Pupils have been taught how to stay safe in the local community and online. Pupils talk with confidence about how to identify risk and keep themselves safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On occasions, pupils are not moved on to new learning when they are ready to do so, which can limit their progression through the curriculum. Leaders should develop teachers' classroom practice further and support them to use assessment information accurately, so that pupils are moved on promptly when they are ready to acquire new knowledge and skills.

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 school to be good in March 2018.

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	138554
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10269237
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	256
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ivan Whitfield
Headteacher	Julie Craggs
Website	www.acreriggacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 and 21 March 2018, under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Acre Rigg Academy is a junior school for pupils aged between seven and 11. It is the same size as an average-sized primary school.
- The school is a sponsored academy. It is one of seven schools in the Tudhoe Learning Trust. The trustees of the Tudhoe Learning Trust are the school's accountable body. They have delegated many powers to the local governing body. The trust's CEO reports directly to the trustees.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken this into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, leaders for behaviour, safeguarding, personal development and mental health, and members of staff, as well as a range of pupils.

- The inspector carried out deep dives into reading, mathematics and design technology. For each deep dive, she discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked to teachers and pupils. The inspector also listened to pupils reading.
- The inspector reviewed the response to Ofsted's parent questionnaire, Parent View, and survey responses from staff and pupils.
- A meeting was held with the chief executive officer of the Tudhoe Learning Trust and the associate headteacher who works with leaders on school improvement.
- Members of the school's governing body, including the chair and vice chair, met with the inspector.
- The school's office administrator met the inspector to discuss recruitment and safeguarding records.

Inspection team

Anne Vernon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
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