

# Inspection of The Ropemakers' Academy

Reef Way, Hailsham, East Sussex BN27 1FB

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Inspection dates: 21 and 22 June 2023

<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>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

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

Pupils love coming to school. They arrive each morning with big smiles on their faces. Pupils feel happy, safe and enjoy the warm welcome from caring staff who give them time to settle. Staff are trained well to reduce anxieties. They do all they can to sort out any worries or concerns that pupils may have. Within weeks of arriving at the school, pupils are settled and often making good strides in their understanding of the curriculum.

Leaders have high expectations regarding behaviour. The schools' nurturing approach means that any challenging behaviours are managed in a caring way. This means that pupils are usually in the right mindset to learn. If there is any bullying, staff are really good at sorting it out quickly.

Leaders expect pupils to try their best in lessons. Pupils try hard to meet this expectation. They listen carefully to the teacher and follow instructions well. In one lesson for example, pupils followed the recipe instructions to make fruit kebabs very carefully.

Parents speak highly about the school. They appreciate the nurturing approach built on love, compassion and kindness and that pupils benefit from a wide range of therapies such as speech and language, art and occupational therapy.

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

The curriculum is ambitious and well planned. It is personalised to match the needs of each pupil. Leaders have identified the most important knowledge that they want pupils to learn and how and when this should be taught. Pupils access the full national curriculum. Teachers use a range of detailed strategies to check pupils' understanding and identify the next steps they need. Education, health and care plans (EHC) are used to identify pupils' needs well.

Teachers support pupils effectively to engage with their learning. They understand each pupil's needs well and help them to manage their behaviour skilfully. There is very little low-level disruption in class, so teachers can concentrate on helping pupils to learn well. Teachers provide pupils with regular opportunities to enable pupils to review and apply the knowledge they gain. This helps pupils to know and remember more over time.

Reading has a high priority. Many pupils cannot read with accuracy when they start at the school. Staff identify those pupils who need extra help quickly and give them the support needed to catch up. Pupils at an early stage of learning to read learn phonic knowledge through a well-structured programme. Staff ensure that pupils' reading books match the sounds that they know. All pupils have many opportunities

to read both fiction and non-fiction books. This supports pupils to learn to read with fluency quickly. The school is developing a library area to support reading further. Pupils have enjoyed contributing their ideas regarding the layout.

The curriculum promotes pupils' broader development well. Leaders seek to create opportunities to build pupils' confidence and resilience and encourage pupils to work together as a team. Recently, pupils enjoyed attending a sporting event where they played cricket, football and invasion games. Pupils have opportunities to learn about healthy lifestyles and to develop an understanding about how to be healthy and active citizens. Pupils enjoy learning about other cultures. They participated in a drumming workshop to celebrate the music of different cultures during World Music Day.

There is a clear careers education programme in place for all pupils. They benefit from a range of work experience programmes, such as working with animals or car mechanics. Staff ensure that pupils are prepared well for adulthood, including through the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. Pupils have completed some nationally recognised qualifications, including GCSE. However, some pupils in key stages 3 and 4 do not attend school regularly enough. This impacts negatively on their preparation for future education, employment or training.

The school is well led and managed. Staff consider that morale is high and that leaders support them well in managing any behavioural issues. Those with governance responsibilities know the school well. They have assured themselves that all pupils receive a good quality of education. However, governors have overlooked some of their key duties such as monitoring school policies regularly.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Keeping everyone safe is a priority. Systems for checking on the suitability of staff to work in school are meticulous. Detailed policies and regular training ensure that everyone in the school community knows what to do if they have a concern about a pupil. Leaders are quick to follow up issues. They ensure that pupils are safe when they attend alternative provision.

Pupils are very knowledgeable about risk and how to keep themselves safe. They learn about the dangers of drugs and alcohol and keeping safe online. Pupils know that adults will listen to them if they have any worries.

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

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

- Some pupils in key stages 3 and 4 do not attend school regularly enough. This means that they miss valuable learning time which impacts negatively on their achievement and preparation for the next stage of their lives. Leaders should continue their work to support pupils to attend school habitually.
- Those with responsibility for governance have not ensured that policies, including some statutory policies, refer specifically to this school and are fully up to date. Although this has not had a negative impact on pupils, there is the potential for key statutory information to be missed. The local governing body should take responsibility, as outlined in the scheme of delegation, for the monitoring cycle of policies and to ensure they reflect current government guidelines.

## 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>	148035
<b>Local authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10256251
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	65
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Laurence Nesbitt
<b>Headteacher</b>	Simon Hawthorne
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.beckmeadtrust.org/ropemakers">www.beckmeadtrust.org/ropemakers</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The Ropemakers Academy opened in September 2020. It moved into a purpose-built building in April 2021. The school is part of the Beckmead Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school provides education for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Some pupils have autism spectrum disorder. All pupils in the school have an EHC plan.
- The school currently caters for pupils in Year 2 to Year 11.
- School leaders make use of two unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 11 with information and engagement about approved technical education 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 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 spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders and staff. An inspector spoke with the chief executive officer and deputy chief executive officer of the Beckmead Multi-Academy Trust and local governors.
- Inspectors spoke to many pupils about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, including the single central record. They met with leaders, staff and pupils to check how effective safeguarding is in the school. An inspector held telephone conversations with representatives of both alternative providers.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school's self evaluation document, school improvement plan, minutes of governance meetings, records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, including early reading, design and technology, mathematics and personal, social, health and economic education (PHSE). 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. An inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar member of staff.
- The responses to Ofsted Parent View and the responses to the staff and pupil surveys were considered.

## Inspection team

Liz Bowes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Sue Bzikot

Ofsted Inspector

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