

Inspection of Ipswich Academy

Braziers Wood Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP3 0SP

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 May 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

The co-principals of this school are Abbie Thorrington and Samuel Fox. This school is part of Paradigm Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Bill Holledge, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Willis. There is also a director of school improvement, Ben Carter, who is responsible for this school and six others.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils trust adults to listen to, follow up, and help resolve, any worries they have. This helps pupils to feel happy and safe. They value the school's help with issues they face in their wider lives. This includes the school chaplain who provides bereavement and counselling to support pupils' mental health.

Pupils experience some high-quality teaching that enables them to build knowledge well. However, too often this is not the case, particularly where pupils are taught by cover teachers for extended periods. This means that some pupils have developed gaps in their knowledge and have not achieved well enough.

Pupils understand the school's expectations for behaviour. However, some do not follow these expectations consistently enough. Some pupils spend time outside of lessons as a result of their behaviour, missing important learning.

Pupils benefit from a rich range of personal development opportunities. As part of the 'hinterland project' all pupils have had access to fully funded trips abroad to places, like France. This builds their cultural understanding. They also enjoy the range of clubs and competitive sporting fixture opportunities. These support their social development well.

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

The trust and school have carefully planned the important knowledge pupils should learn in each subject. However, there is too much inconsistency in how well the intended curriculum is taught. This is due to temporary teaching arrangements and because the school has not been rigorous enough in its challenge and support for staff. This has meant that some pupils have developed gaps in their knowledge and produce work that is not of a high enough standard.

The proportion of pupils entering the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is low. This limits the range of knowledge pupils build. The school is already taking action to increase the proportion of pupils who continue to study modern foreign language and separate sciences during key stage 4.

Leaders have implemented an effective programme of support for those at the earliest stages of reading. The precise barriers to pupils reading are quickly identified. Pupils receive well-targeted support that helps them to learn to read confidently.

The school has outlined clear and appropriate strategies to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, staff do not use these consistently well enough. The school has not checked carefully how staff are using these strategies in the classroom.

The school has clear expectations for pupils' behaviour and provides suitable support to help pupils address the causes of poor behaviour. However, some staff do not follow the school's behaviour policy consistently. This means that some pupils miss out on important learning. The use of unkind language is too frequent. Some pupils have become too used to this and do not always report it to staff when they hear it.

Leaders have ensured that pupils' attendance has been on a path of improvement following the pandemic. Leaders quickly identify barriers to non-attendance and take prompt and appropriate action to address these.

Personal development is well promoted through an extensive programme of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). Pupils benefit from a comprehensive programme of careers support. This helps them to be well informed about their next steps. The careers curriculum includes a range of expert input and guidance. For example, pupils recently learned about the inspirational role of women in the Royal Air Force, which also broadened their understanding of equality.

The trust knows the areas the school needs to improve and is providing regular school improvement support to help achieve this. However, the school has not been rigorous enough in its challenge and support for ensuring consistency of high standards in teaching and pupil behaviour. For some staff this has impacted on their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not ensured that the curriculum is taught consistently well. Where temporary teaching arrangements have been in place, pupils have developed gaps in their knowledge. These gaps have not been addressed effectively enough, so pupils have not achieved as well as they should. The school needs to ensure that both permanent and temporary staff receive appropriate support so that pupils receive a consistently high standard of teaching.
- The proportion of pupils who complete the EBacc is low. As a result, some pupils do not study a sufficiently wide range of subjects. The school needs to continue its work to ensure that pupils in key stage 4 study an ambitious range of subjects, particularly in modern foreign languages and sciences.
- The school has not ensured that teachers provide the agreed support for pupils with SEND. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they could or produce high-quality work. The school needs to ensure that all teachers use the identified strategies to support the needs of pupils with SEND consistently well.

- Some pupils do not behave consistently well, particularly when cover teachers are used. When this is the case, pupils miss important learning. Leaders must ensure staff understand and implement the behaviour policy effectively.
- The use of offensive language is too common. The school needs to ensure that all staff follow the behaviour policy consistently and that all pupils understand and quickly report any unkind language they hear so it can be addressed promptly.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	136453
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10345300
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	1057
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Willis
CEO of trust	Bill Holledge
Co-Principals	Abbie Thorrington and Samuel Fox
Website	ipswichacademy.paradigmtrust.org
Dates of previous inspection	5 and 6 March 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses four unregistered alternative providers.
- The principal, Abbie Thorrington, was appointed in June 2020. From February 2023 Samuel Fox was appointed interim principal. In December 2023, a co-principal model was established.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- To discuss governance and trust leadership an inspector met with trustees, the chief executive officer, trust director of school improvement and representatives of the local academy committee.
- Inspectors met with representatives from the trust, the headteacher, special educational needs coordinator, designated safeguarding leads, behaviour, attendance and personal development leads, school subject leaders and staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, art, geography and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spent additional time discussing and exploring careers, including meeting with the careers lead.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum in some other subjects, including PSHE and relationships and sex education, languages, music, drama and business studies.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around school and at social times.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first. Inspectors also held dedicated meetings to explore attendance.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and Ofsted's staff survey. They considered responses to the parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text messages.

Inspection team

James Chester, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Aimee Bray	Ofsted Inspector
Alastair Ogle	Ofsted Inspector
Aron Whiles	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024