

Inspection of The Rural Enterprise Academy

Rodbaston Drive, Penkridge, Staffordshire ST19 5PH

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 July 2024

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Good

The headteacher of this school is Alice Corrigan. This school is part of Penk Valley Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Brynley Evans, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Mark Roberts.

What is it like to attend this school?

The Rural Enterprise Academy offers a curriculum for pupils who are interested in sustainability, environmental and land-based subjects. However, too many weaknesses in how the curriculum is organised and taught mean that pupils do not achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not have their needs accurately identified and assessed. They do not progress well.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is generally calm and orderly. Some pupils are disengaged in lessons because lessons are not adapted to meet their needs. Too often, when pupils do not meet the school's behaviour expectations, they are not supported to prevent further repeat incidents. As a result, the number of consequences for these pupils remains high and their behaviour does not improve.

There are significant concerns about the school's approach and lack of strategic oversight of safeguarding. The school has not ensured that there is a vigilant culture to safeguard pupils. This leaves pupils at risk of harm.

Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with SEND, do not attend school often enough. The strategy to help improve their attendance is not working. This means that too many pupils do not receive their education entitlement.

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

Since the last inspection, the school has experienced some significant challenges that have resulted in a decline in standards. The school's actions to address those challenges are incomplete. Pupils have low academic outcomes. Too many are behind in their reading. Pupils are absent from school too often. They are not supported well enough to remember what they have been taught. The approach to helping pupils improve their behaviour is not effective. Pupils are at risk of harm.

Attendance for all pupils is consistently low and has decreased over time. The school does not analyse its attendance data well. This means the school does not identify trends and is unaware of which pupils need extra support to help them attend school regularly. The checks to establish where pupils are, or why they have not attended school, are not carried out with any sense of urgency. This contributes to a worsening picture of pupils' attendance.

The school has recently made changes to its behaviour policy. As a result, most pupils behave well in lessons and at social times. However, the school's consequences are not deterring those whose behaviour falls short of the expected standard. These pupils are not given appropriate support to help them learn from their mistakes. This means that the same pupils often repeat the same unwanted behaviours.

The curriculum is centred around developing pupils' farming and environmental interests. The choice of subjects at key stage 4 is limited by this. In key stage 3,

pupils study a broad range of subjects. For example, 'creative studies' gives pupils a flavour of languages, art and history. In some subjects, the curriculum builds on pupils' knowledge over time effectively, but in others, this is not the case, and learning is not sequenced well or coherently. Teachers' activity choices to help pupils embed knowledge securely are not well thought out. The learning activities are not adapted to meet the needs of pupils. As a result, pupils become disengaged and do not grasp the knowledge they require effectively.

Teachers use a range of strategies to check pupils' understanding. However, frequently the information from these checks is not used well enough. This means that, too often, teachers introduce new learning without closing any existing gaps in pupils' knowledge. As a result, pupils do not progress well.

The school has not prioritised reading sufficiently well for pupils who struggle to read. Although the school identifies who these pupils are, it has not ensured that the support in place is working effectively. As a result, some pupils do not make adequate progress in reading and do not catch up quickly.

The school does not ensure that pupils' additional needs are identified accurately, nor are their needs effectively met. For some pupils, their needs go undiagnosed for too long. The school has not identified effective strategies to help these pupils access the curriculum. Their work is either incomplete or has not been attempted. As a result, pupils with SEND do not benefit from a suitable education.

Citizenship, personal, social and health education is taught weekly, alongside tutor time and assemblies. It revisits topics over time and aims to develop pupils' character. Pupils can take part in a range of clubs and trips, such as museum visits and visits to the coast for water sports. Careers education is suitable. Pupils who are interested in different pathways are well informed about a variety of next steps. However, some pupils, in particular those who are vulnerable, leave the school without going on to further education or training. The school does not routinely monitor the destinations of pupils so is not aware of why this is the case or what these pupils go on to do.

The school does not have effective systems in place to accurately check on its performance. Those responsible for governance lack strategic oversight, which has led to a decline in standards. They have not taken effective action to stem the decline in attainment of its most vulnerable pupils. They have not ensured that pupils who are taught off site are in appropriate placements suitable to meet their needs. The school lacks capacity to improve and fails to provide pupils with an acceptable standard of education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The school has ensured that the staff who work there receive appropriate safeguarding checks. However, they have not assured themselves that the pupils who attend off-site placements are appropriately safeguarded.

There is a lack of routine and robust oversight of the school's approach to safeguarding. The school uses its systems in a disorganised and inconsistent way, which makes analysis of safeguarding information difficult. Concerns about the most vulnerable pupils are often unknown. As a result, some pupils do not receive appropriate and effective help at the right time. The support given to pupils does not always prevent incidents from occurring again.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not ensured that information about safeguarding is kept in an organised and useable way. As a result, interventions are not always timely or effective and pupils continue to be at risk. The school should make sure that safeguarding records provide effective oversight of actions to ensure pupils receive the support they need at the time they need it to be safe.
- The school has not completed appropriate checks, including safeguarding checks, for external placements pupils attend. This means pupils are at potential risk of harm. The school should ensure that placements pupils attend are suitable to meet their needs and that they are safeguarded.
- Patterns of pupils' attendance are not monitored nor analysed effectively. Attendance remains low. The school does not always know where pupils are, why they are not in school and if they are safe. The school should analyse attendance data rigorously and use it to inform appropriate actions and interventions to support pupils and their families.
- Pupils do not benefit from a high-quality education. The curriculum is not sequenced in a coherent way. This means learning is not always linked well to what pupils already know and so they struggle to remember their learning. The school should ensure the curriculum in each subject is sequenced well so that pupils can build on their knowledge over time.
- The curriculum is not adapted to meet the needs of pupils. This means that pupils struggle to access the curriculum. The school should ensure learning opportunities are adapted to meet the range of pupils' needs and take into account their starting points.
- Reading has not been prioritised for those who struggle to read. The school does not know if the support in place is helping the pupils to improve their reading. The school should ensure it implements effective strategies to support pupils at the early stages of reading so they can catch up quickly.
- There is a lack of strategic oversight of what is happening in the school. As a result, insufficient action has been taken to tackle weaknesses at the school. As a result, pupils are not receiving an acceptable standard of education. The school

should ensure effective monitoring of actions taken enables a clear understanding of their impact, and that there is increased accountability.

- Pupils who require support to help improve their behaviour are not getting the help they need. Too many pupils receive repeat consequences for poor behaviour. The school should ensure the analysis of behaviour data and effective interventions support these pupils to improve their behaviour.
- The school does not monitor the destinations of pupils effectively. There are an increasing number of pupils leaving the school who are not in education or employment. The school should use information about pupils' destinations effectively to ensure they get support to help them secure appropriate next steps.
- It is strongly recommended that the school does not appoint early career teachers.

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	138351
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10322832
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	236
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mark Roberts
Headteacher	Alice Corrigan
Website	www.ruralenterpriseacademy.com
Dates of previous inspection	9 and 10 May 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school offers subjects and experiences for pupils who are interested in environmental, sustainability and land-based subjects.
- The school is one of seven schools in the Penk Valley Academy Trust.
- The school uses three registered alternative provisions for some pupils.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative provisions for some pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 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.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, other senior leaders, the chief executive officer, the chair of the governing body and the chair of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, geography and science. 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 held meetings with leaders of these areas: behaviour, attendance, SEND, personal development, careers, reading, alternative provision and pupil premium.
- Inspectors completed a learning walk focusing on how well the curriculum is adapted to suit the needs of all pupils.
- Inspectors met with pupils who had experienced behaviour consequences, met with single-sex groups of girls and boys, met with pupil leaders and spoke to pupils informally at social times.
- Inspectors also visited lessons in some other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders of alternative provisions.
- Inspectors reviewed and analysed responses to the staff, pupil and parent surveys.
- 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.

Inspection team

Sultanat Yunus, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sarah Godden

Ofsted Inspector

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