

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Icknield Community College

Love Lane, Watlington, Oxfordshire OX49 5RB

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 December 2024

Outcome

Icknield Community College has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of the school is Mat Hunter. This school is part of Acer Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Nathan Thomas, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jill Cottee.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to be members of this ambitious and friendly school. They learn about the school's values of 'integrity, care and commitment'. Pupils understand why these matter and demonstrate them widely in their considerate and affable conduct across the school. Across lessons, the majority of pupils work with focus and purpose. They contribute ideas willingly in discussions and complete learning activities keenly. The school's high expectations and positive learning ethos support the majority of pupils to achieve well.

Pupils value the warm and respectful relationships they have with staff. They feel well known and talk about how this helps them to feel they belong in the school. Pupils value the strong pastoral support provided by staff. This helps them to develop self-confidence and to learn how to navigate challenges. Pupils value the recognition of their individual and collective successes. They appreciate how the school shares these with parents and carers.

Pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the wider opportunities provided by the school. They enthusiastically share the memorable experiences gained through the broad range of clubs, competitions and trips. They talk about how these broaden their horizons. One parent, reflecting the views of many, said, 'The school offers great learning opportunities.'

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

The school curriculum is broad and ambitious. Across subjects, the important knowledge, skills and vocabulary pupils need to learn are carefully arranged. The curriculum deliberately re-visits earlier learning. This helps pupils remember more over time and link new knowledge to earlier learning.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge across subjects. They typically explain new ideas clearly and support these with appropriate demonstrations. Teachers mostly use methods of checking pupils' understanding, and they correct errors in their thinking effectively. Consequently, across subjects, the majority of pupils achieve well. However, in some subject lessons, pockets of disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as strongly as their peers. In these lessons, teachers do not always promptly identify when these pupils struggle to apply new learning. When this happens, these pupils can lose engagement and not always complete learning activities. Consequently, they continue to have knowledge gaps.

The school identifies the needs of pupils with special educational needs/and or disabilities (SEND) carefully. Teachers make appropriate adaptations, drawing on strategies detailed in pupil profiles. Pupils with more complex SEND are ably supported by teaching assistants. They progress well through the planned curriculum.

Reading is a high priority. Across the curriculum, pupils benefit from reading a diverse range of challenging texts. They enjoy class reads in tutor time, which further enriches their experience of reading. Pupils who are at the earlier stages of reading receive targeted support so that they become confident and fluent readers.

The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour. These are strongly promoted across the school. In lessons, teachers clearly communicate these expectations. Pupils respond positively to these, and across lessons, pupils' behaviour is calm and orderly. Around the school, pupils behave responsibly and show consideration for others. The school provides highly effective pastoral support for pupils if their behaviour does not meet expectations.

There is rich work to develop pupils' character. The 'citizenship' curriculum helps pupils develop informed views about important issues such as diversity and equality. There is a sharp focus on learning how to keep safe and look after mental health. Pupils contribute widely to the school through meaningful leadership roles and school council discussions. The careers curriculum prepares pupils exceptionally well for their next steps beyond school.

The school strives to achieve the best outcomes for pupils. Changes are carefully made to ensure they are sustained across the school. The impact of these changes is rigorously reviewed. Governors and the trust contribute, providing effective challenge and support. Staff are effusive about working in the school and value its mindful approach to workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A few disadvantaged pupils do not develop their understanding of the important knowledge being taught in some core subject lessons. As a result, they struggle to start or complete learning activities and lose engagement. The school needs to ensure that teaching approaches across core subjects identify and address when disadvantaged pupils have insecure understanding, so that they know and remember more over time.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in March 2015.

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 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	143984
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10341840
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	775
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jill Cottee
CEO of the trust	Nathan Thomas
Headteacher	Mat Hunter
Website	www.icknield.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 March 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a member of the Acer Trust.
- The school uses two registered and four unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school meets the requirements of 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

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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.

- The inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders and teachers. The lead inspector met with representatives of the local governing board, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer.
- The inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to pupils and looked at samples of their work.
- The inspectors observed breaktime and lunchtime activities.
- 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.
- The inspectors considered the responses to the pupil and staff surveys and spoke to a range of pupils and staff about their views of the school. They considered the school's development plan.
- The inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the additional free-text responses.

Inspection team

Phillip Blagg, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Julia Mortimore

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 looked-after children, 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