

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: The Ripley Academy

Peasehill, Ripley, Derbyshire DE5 3JQ

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 February 2025

Outcome

The Ripley Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The executive headteacher of this school is Helen Frost-Briggs. The school is part of the East Midlands Education Trust (EMET), which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Rob McDonough, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ann Witheford.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, and students in the sixth form, are proud to attend Ripley Academy. The school is their community. Pastoral care is strong. Pupils and their families are known extremely well. Staff go 'above and beyond' to make sure pupils receive the help they need. Pupils know that they have a trusted adult to turn to. They said that this really matters to them and that it helps them to feel safe.

Staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. The aspiration is to ensure that all pupils become 'nothing short of remarkable'. Pupils are beginning to live up to these expectations. Pupils' achievement is improving.

Pupils' behaviour has significantly improved. The behaviour policy is working. Pupils are clear about the consequences of poor behaviour. They value the rewards that they receive for behaving well. Learning is now rarely disrupted.

The school recognises the importance of ensuring that pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), gain wider opportunities beyond the curriculum. Pupils relish these opportunities. They visit places in the community and abroad. Activities take place daily. Pupils particularly appreciate the trips to local restaurants, an experience that they may not otherwise receive.

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

The school has experienced a great deal of change since the previous inspection. COVID-19 had a significant impact on the school community, particularly the mental health and well-being of pupils and their families. There have been a number of staff changes. Leaders have acted swiftly, and in the interests of pupils, to address the challenges faced. They have taken effective action. The school is back on track and is improving at pace. The ambition, commitment and pride of the 'Ripley way' is evident.

The curriculum is ambitious. It focuses on the knowledge pupils need to know and when they need to learn it. There are opportunities for pupils to return to important knowledge so that it can be remembered long term. However, in a few subjects, the curriculum is not as consistently well delivered. In some subjects, such as English, staff are successful at applying the school's 'TRA' teaching strategies. However, in a few subjects, staff do not routinely identify gaps in pupils' learning. Insufficient checks are made to establish pupils' starting points so they can then be built upon effectively. When such checks do not take place, pupils struggle to develop a secure understanding of what they have been taught. Published outcomes, although improving, show that pupils do not achieve as well as they could in some subjects. However, students in the sixth form receive a more consistently strong learning experience.

The provision for pupils with SEND has improved. The needs of these pupils are identified swiftly. Pupils with SEND receive effective therapeutic support and care within the 'Bridge' provision. However, the curriculum is not routinely suitably adapted across all the subjects these pupils study. This is a barrier to their learning.

Reading is a school priority. Pupils receive the help that they need as soon as they start school. A comprehensive reading curriculum is in place, including phonics, to ensure that pupils learn to read fluently and with confidence. The library is well resourced and is used regularly by pupils. Passionate staff promote the love of reading at every opportunity. 'Remarkable readers' are rewarded when they are spotted reading well. Pupils express a genuine appreciation of these rewards. The sixth form 'buddy readers' programme is effective.

The school is a front-line service for many in the community. Extensive work takes place with families to ensure pupils are safe, avoid suspension and attend well. The school is now seeing the fruits of this hard work. More pupils are in school. Although suspensions are higher than the school's aspiration, far fewer pupils are suspended from school for poor behaviour than was previously the case.

Increasing pupils' aspirations is important to the school. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, benefit from high-quality careers advice and guidance. They visit universities, learn about apprenticeships and gain work experience from local employers. Sixth-form students express confidence and ambition for their next steps.

There is effective oversight of the school. The local governing body shows great commitment to the school. Members are knowledgeable and expertly supported by the

trust.

New staff are breathing fresh air into the school. There is a sense of real optimism, pride and enthusiasm to do the very best for the Ripley pupils. Although there have been challenges, staff feel well supported by leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes the needs of pupils with SEND are not always met well. When this is the case, these pupils do not learn as well as they should. The school should ensure that teachers are more consistently using the information, and using the skills needed, to make sure learning is appropriately adapted across all subjects for pupils with SEND.
- In some subjects, staff do not consistently check pupils' understanding or identify learning gaps as effectively as they could. This impacts negatively on pupils' achievement. The school should ensure that regular checks are made by staff to make sure that pupils' prior learning is secure and then skilfully built upon. This will support pupils to acquire the knowledge they need to progress through the curriculum successfully and achieve well.
- Although pupil suspensions are decreasing, they remain too high for some vulnerable pupils. The school should continue the work to reduce the number of pupils who are suspended from school, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in February 2020.

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	141259
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10366950
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	902
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	92
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ann Witheford
CEO of the trust	Rob McDonough
Headteacher	Helen Frost-Briggs (Executive Headteacher)
Website	ripleyacademy.org
Dates of previous inspection	4 and 5 February 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the East Midlands Education Trust.
- The executive headteacher took up the post in the Autumn term 2022. She is responsible for this school and one other school within the trust.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provision and one unregistered provision.
- 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

- Inspectors 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.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met with the CEO, Deputy CEO and chair of the board of trustees. She also met with members of the local governing body.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of information to evaluate the provision for SEND.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of information about pupils' attendance. They observed the behaviour of pupils in classrooms, at social times and as they arrived at school.
- The views of staff who responded to Ofsted's surveys were considered. Additionally, inspectors reviewed the views of parents through Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Jayne Ashman, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Debbie Ridley

Ofsted Inspector

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