

The Rural Enterprise Academy

Rodbaston Campus, Penkridge, Staffordshire ST19 5PH

Inspection dates

9–10 May 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal and vice-principal lead the school well. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and take informed action to make improvements.
- Leaders have created a positive and aspirational culture in the school. Pupils are well cared for and happy.
- There is some very high-quality teaching in the school that has led to strong outcomes. Current pupils are making good progress.
- Low prior-attaining pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make good progress in the school.
- Staff value the training opportunities that they are given and share best practice in the school. However, there have been limited opportunities for them to observe outstanding teaching elsewhere.
- The curriculum is tailored to pupils' interests. It promotes good progress and personal development very well. A wide range of enrichment activities support learning in the classroom.
- Fundamental British values and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) are deeply embedded in the ethos of the school.
- Safeguarding is effective. There is a strong culture for keeping pupils safe. The school's nurturing and inclusive ethos promotes all aspects of pupils' welfare.
- Pastoral leadership has been enhanced since the time of the last inspection. However, subject leadership is still underdeveloped. Leaders plan to address this through closer working relationships with other schools.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. The refined behaviour management system is helping to further improve pupils' conduct. However, since the last inspection, fixed-term exclusions have been higher than the national average.
- Most pupils attend regularly and many have improved attendance since joining the school. However, some pupils are still absent too often.
- Not all teaching matches the best in the school. Where it has less impact, activities do not challenge pupils to make rapid progress from their different starting points.
- Although improving, outcomes for the most able pupils have not matched the national average for similar pupils.
- Effective action has been taken to improve the learning, behaviour and attendance of disadvantaged pupils. However, the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally remains.
- Although improving, attainment has been below the national average since the last inspection.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase pupils' levels of attainment by ensuring that:
 - all teaching matches the quality of the best in the school
 - staff consistently challenge all pupils, particularly the most able, to make rapid progress
 - strategies to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils further reduce the differences between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally
 - staff are given more opportunities to learn from outstanding practice outside of the school.
- Improve personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - refining current systems and practices to further reduce levels of absence
 - embedding the current behaviour management strategies to help pupils continue to improve their conduct and to sustain the decline in fixed-term exclusions.
- Take opportunities to work with other schools to develop leadership capacity beyond the high-quality principal and vice-principal.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders lead and manage the school well. The principal and vice-principal are a cohesive team who lead by example. They have raised aspirations within a caring culture. They consistently take actions in the best interests of the pupils. Positive relationships between leaders, staff and pupils support the good progress that pupils make.
- Senior leaders are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and they are taking effective action to further improve the school. They monitor all aspects of the school's work closely, and use detailed information to address any areas for development.
- Leaders took effective action to improve pupils' outcomes after the 2016 public examination results, and they have addressed the areas for improvement that were identified at the time of the last inspection. As a result, mathematics is now one of the strongest subjects in the school, effective additional support and interventions are in place for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and a consultant provides an accurate and useful external validation of the work of the school.
- Middle leadership is improving, and leaders have plans in place to develop subject leadership through closer working relationships with other schools.
- Staff value the training opportunities that they are given, and most respond very positively to the feedback that they receive. Staff share best practice within the school, but there have been limited opportunities for them to observe outstanding teaching and learning elsewhere.
- The curriculum is tailored to the interests of the pupils. It develops rural enterprise and allows pupils to make good progress in a range of subjects. It promotes personal development very well and makes a marked contribution to pupils' positive behaviour and physical and mental well-being.
- A wide range of enrichment activities supports learning in the classroom. Pupils participate in outdoor pursuits, fly-fishing, enterprise opportunities, the national citizenship service, sporting activities and visits to universities. Year 9 pupils recently won the Stafford School Constituency Debating Competition, held in the Houses of Parliament.
- Fundamental British values and SMSC development are deeply embedded within the curriculum. Pupils have a clear understanding of cultures that are different from their own. They learn about all the major religions, and they are tolerant and respectful of the beliefs of other people. Leaders and staff openly promote diversity and equality of opportunity. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders use additional funding effectively in the school. They use funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities well to help targeted pupils access the range of opportunities that are available at the school. It is also used effectively to help them to make good progress. Leaders use the pupil premium funding to employ additional staff who provide interventions tailored to pupils' particular needs. It has helped

disadvantaged pupils improve their progress, attainment, behaviour and attendance. Further improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils remains a priority for leaders.

- Parents and carers are extremely positive about the school. They are full of praise for the way staff communicate with them, and many commented on how the ethos of the school has helped their children re-engage with education. Every parent who made their views known during the inspection said that the school is well led and managed.
- The school receives a range of effective services and financial support from the South Staffordshire College.

Governance of the school

- Governors use their extensive skills and experience to offer appropriate support and challenge to school leaders. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They have held the principal and vice-principal to close account over pupils' outcomes, behaviour and attendance.
- The board of governors fulfils its statutory duties effectively. Governors ensure that resources are managed well, that additional funding is used appropriately and that safeguarding procedures are robust.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are well trained and have a very clear understanding of their responsibilities. A strong culture for safeguarding pupils is evident in the school.
- Safeguarding is a priority for leaders and staff. Referrals are timely, and staff take appropriate action when required. Leaders follow up concerns thoroughly.
- The school's single central record is compliant, and information is stored securely. Pupils, staff and parents correctly believe that pupils are safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- There is some very high-quality teaching in the school and practice is improving. Where teaching is most effective, activities are adapted to provide challenge for pupils with different starting points. Staff have high expectations and use targeted questions and their subject knowledge well to deepen pupils' understanding. Teachers deploy teaching assistants carefully, and time is used well.
- Pupils enjoy positive relationships with staff and they work well together. Teaching assistants usually provide very high-quality support, and staff tailor the work that they set to help pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress.
- Pupils have developed the capacity to learn from their mistakes. They use staff feedback well to address weaknesses in order to improve their work.
- The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in a wide range of subjects. Teaching in every subject enhances pupils'

communication skills. The teaching of mathematics has improved considerably since the last inspection.

- College staff teach land-based subjects well. Pupils make good progress as a result of clear demonstrations, carefully planned practical learning and high levels of engagement.
- Not all teaching matches the best that can be found in the school. Where teaching is less effective, staff do not plan or resource activities that allow pupils to make strong progress from their different starting points. Pupils, particularly the most able, are not consistently challenged to make rapid progress. At times, the work is too easy.
- Assessment is accurate, and the school gives parents clear information about how their child is progressing and what they need to do to improve. Regular contact with parents gives them opportunities to have detailed discussions with staff about their child's progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are polite, honest, considerate and happy. The school's open, nurturing and inclusive culture promotes all aspects of pupils' welfare.
- Pupils are proud of their school and they are keen to take on responsibilities for the benefit of others. Pupils support staff on duty; some are prefects, others are ambassadors during school events and some act as peer mentors. The school council and pupil focus groups influenced a move towards healthier food being served in the school canteen.
- The school develops physical and emotional well-being very well. Staff know the pupils well and offer good levels of personalised support. Pupils feel that they can talk to staff should any issues arise.
- Bullying is rare, and pupils are confident that staff will deal quickly and effectively with any incidents should they happen. During the inspection, parents, staff and pupils raised no concerns about bullying.
- Pupils are taught to stay safe when using the internet, and they learn how to stay safe in a range of situations. For example, they are taught about how to protect themselves from the dangers of radicalisation and how to stay safe when caring for animals.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well in lessons and show a keen interest in their studies. Learning is very rarely disrupted.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school and demonstrate self-discipline. The school is a calm and orderly environment.
- The behaviour management process has been refined recently. Pupils respond positively to high expectations and they understand the consequences of inappropriate

behaviour. Rewards and strategies to de-escalate situations are used effectively to reduce instances of poor behaviour.

- Pupils who find it more challenging to manage their own behaviour are effectively supported to behave very well. Permanent exclusions are rare, and the rate of fixed-term exclusions is now declining. Pupils who found it difficult to behave appropriately in previous settings are helped to thrive in this school. However, the proportion of pupils who have been excluded for a short period of time has been higher than the national average since the last inspection.
- Pupils are punctual and, as a result of effective action, attendance is improving. Most pupils attend regularly and many have better attendance than in their previous schools. However, absence rates are still too high. Leaders are aware that improving attendance remains a key priority for the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Current pupils who attend regularly make good progress in a range of subjects. Strengths in mathematics, science, business studies and land-based courses have been maintained. Progress is improving in other areas of the curriculum including geography and French. Teachers have built on the improved progress that Year 11 pupils made in English in 2017.
- Pupils are encouraged to read widely and often. The school library contains a range of books that allow pupils to access information and read for pleasure at the appropriate level.
- As a result of good teaching of an adapted curriculum, low prior-attaining pupils do well at the school. Since the last inspection, this group of pupils has consistently made faster progress than the national average for pupils with similar starting points. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities also make good progress.
- The improved progress that middle-ability pupils made in 2017 has been sustained. The most able pupils are making faster progress, particularly in mathematics and in the current Year 10. However, since the last inspection, high prior-attaining pupils have not matched the progress made by the most able pupils nationally. Consequently, not enough pupils attain the highest grades at the end of key stage 4. Attainment is below the national average.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making improved progress, and the differences in levels of attainment between this group of pupils and others are diminishing. Since the last inspection, disadvantaged pupils have made similar progress to that of others in the school. However, their attainment remains below that of other pupils nationally.
- Outcomes declined in 2016. However, leaders took informed action to address weaknesses, and results improved considerably in 2017.
- A-level outcomes were below the national average in 2016 but they were above average in 2017. There are currently no students in the sixth form.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. As a result of high-quality careers education, tailored work-related learning and good

outcomes, almost all pupils move on to appropriate destinations. Between a third and a half of pupils move onto land-based studies at the appropriate level.

School details

Unique reference number	138351
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10048284

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	13 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	135
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Claire Bolliver
Principal	Lorraine Makin
Telephone number	01785 333360
Website	www.ruralenterpriseacademy.com
Email address	enquiries@ruralenterpriseacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	12–13 March 2014

Information about this school

- The Rural Enterprise Academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It is situated in a separate building in the grounds of South Staffordshire College.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are well below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, including those who have an education, health and care plan, is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is broadly average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

- Sixth-form provision opened in September 2014. There were small numbers of students on roll between 2014 and 2017. There are currently no students attending the sixth form.
- From September 2015, Year 9 pupils were able to join the school.
- No pupils currently attend alternative provision. All pupils follow vocational courses at South Staffordshire College for two hours a week.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited a range of lessons with leaders. Pupils' learning was observed in the school and at South Staffordshire College.
- The inspector spoke to pupils formally and informally, and observed behaviour in lessons and during social time. Eighteen responses to the pupils' questionnaire were also considered.
- Meetings were held with the principal, the vice-principal and other leaders and staff. The inspector considered 16 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector met with three members of the board of governors, including the chair, and spoke to an external consultant by telephone.
- The inspector analysed 15 responses and free text comments on Parent View. The feedback from recent parental questionnaires, issued by the school, was also reviewed.
- Various school documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan and information about pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance. Documents relating to safeguarding were checked, and the inspector looked at published information on the school's website.

Inspection team

Simon Mosley, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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