

Ryecroft CofE (C) Middle School

Ashbourne Road, Rocester, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire ST14 5NW

Inspection dates

1–2 November 2017

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

- Following a decline in performance, the governing body acted decisively to take the action required to improve the school. They continue to provide effective support and challenge.
- The recently appointed headteacher has demonstrated unstinting commitment to school improvement and has been supported in doing so by an able senior leadership team.
- The local authority has successfully managed a period of change at the school and continues to successfully support the headteacher and other leaders.
- School leaders carefully monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the curriculum. They provide effective support for teachers to help drive further improvements.
- Assessment is well planned across the school. Teachers have a well-developed understanding of how well pupils are achieving.
- Outcomes for pupils in both key stages are improving securely.
- Teaching over time is highly effective in the core curriculum of English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils enjoy school, behave well in lessons and get on well with each other. They are keen to learn and therefore contribute strongly in lessons.
- The curriculum does not successfully support the careers education of pupils in Years 7 and 8.
- Pupils are not fully prepared for life in modern Britain, as they don't have a well-rounded understanding of the nature of our multicultural society.
- Pupils' learning and progress are less secure in some foundation subjects.
- Teaching is not routinely adapted to suit the specific learning needs of different groups of pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning across the school, by leaders:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently tailor their lessons to take account of the needs of different groups of pupils
 - checking that the quality of teaching over time in the foundation subjects consistently matches that in the core curriculum.
- Develop the curriculum provided for the pupils, by school leaders:
 - ensuring that opportunities are provided for careers education, particularly in Years 7 and 8
 - systematically planning for pupils to learn about our multicultural society and how they can most effectively contribute to life in modern Britain
 - reviewing the quality of the learning resources provided in the foundation subjects to ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next phase of their education.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The recently appointed headteacher has had a very positive impact on the school during her time in post. She has worked with unflagging commitment to swiftly diagnose weaknesses and improve pupils' outcomes. The committed senior leadership team has ably supported her in this.
- The senior leadership team has focused squarely on improving teaching and learning across the school. It has made very effective use of systems to manage the performance of teachers. It has worked successfully to recruit new teachers to the staff.
- The local authority has provided highly effective support for the school. Decisive action was taken following concerns expressed about declining performance. An initial strategic alliance was formed with Windsor Park Middle School; this helped to initially strengthen leadership at the school. Following the appointment of the new headteacher, the local authority has continued to visit the school regularly to support senior leaders, as well as helping subject leaders to further develop their practice.
- A renewed focus on teachers' professional development has provided valuable training opportunities for staff. The headteacher regularly visits lessons in order to evaluate the quality of teaching in different subject areas. The feedback to staff following these visits has proved beneficial in sharpening their focus on what works well, and what needs to improve further.
- Staff morale is high and both teachers and support staff share the vision and aspirations of the senior leadership team. The staff are cohesive and committed to securing further improvement.
- Additional funding provided for the school is used well to support the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, as well as those who need to catch up. The school supplements this funding with additional monies to ensure that all pupils who need support are provided with it.
- Sport premium funding has helped to expand the range of extra-curricular sporting opportunities for pupils. Additional specialist sports coaching helps pupils to improve their sporting prowess.
- Funding provided to support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has successfully supported their improved progress over time. These pupils particularly benefit from the help given to them in small groups. However, more needs to be done to ensure that all teachers routinely adjust their practice to make allowance for specific learning needs.
- The curriculum covers a wide range of subjects and topics. This provides pupils across the school with relevant experiences and helps them to develop their skills. However, there is currently not enough focus on careers education, particularly in Years 7 and 8. Additionally, the curriculum in some of the foundation subjects is not effectively planned to ensure that pupils fully understand the links between the different topics they study.

- Pupils are able to take advantage of a range of extra-curricular activities. These include a number of lunchtime clubs as well as a variety of trips and visits. The school makes good use of its connections in the local area to supplement the formal curriculum.
- There is a strong understanding of safeguarding across the school. Pupils understand the possible risks they may face. All staff, both teaching and support, have a detailed knowledge about how to keep children safe and how to report any concerns they may have. This aspect of the school is well led by the knowledgeable and committed deputy headteacher.
- There is particularly strong leadership in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. These leaders work collaboratively with their colleagues in other local middle schools and make successful use of this alliance to moderate their assessment and plan learning. This helps to ensure that pupils are ready for their transition to high school.
- Subject leadership in some foundation subjects is not as strong. Sometimes learning resources in these subjects do not effectively support non-specialist teachers to ensure that all pupils can make rapid progress.
- School improvement plans are highly detailed and contain a range of useful strategies; however, some strategies are not sharply focused enough. As a consequence, it can be difficult for leaders to assess the impact of the actions they have taken.
- Although pupils are given a strong moral education and clearly understand the importance of mutual tolerance and respect, they are not currently exposed enough to the many different cultures and religions that make up modern multicultural Britain. This means pupils have too narrow an experience about life in modern Britain. Senior leaders acknowledge that they need to do more in this aspect of the curriculum.

Governance of the school

- Governance of the school is highly effective.
- There has been a great deal of change in the make-up of the governing body since the last inspection. The current board of governors have been astute and decisive in the actions they have taken to improve the school.
- Governors bring expertise from a range of business as well as educational backgrounds. They work very well together to hold senior leaders at the school to account.
- They carefully scrutinise information provided by school leaders about the progress made by pupils. School leaders are then regularly quizzed about how this information can be used to further improve school performance.
- Governors and school leaders share a clear vision for the school. Current governors are keen to continue supporting school improvement.
- There are effective systems to manage the performance of the headteacher and other staff. This has contributed strongly to recent developments.
- Governors carefully analyse how leaders and managers use additional funding to support the needs of specific groups of pupils. They routinely check that this funding is making a difference.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. School policies and procedures support all staff in keeping children safe from harm.
- All staff are trained in how to assess risk and what action needs to be taken in the event of any concern. They are kept up to date through weekly safeguarding briefings. This helps to ensure that everyone has the necessary understanding to successfully work together in this important aspect of school life.
- Pupils have a strong understanding of how to keep safe. They are systematically taught about the different risks they may face and what to do if they are concerned. All pupils spoken to felt they could approach their teachers if they needed to. The curriculum provides regular opportunities for pupils to learn more about this. For example, they could clearly explain to inspectors how they take steps to stay safe online.
- Staff who work at the school are carefully checked to ensure that they are suitable to work with children.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good and improving. Current pupils are making good progress due to well-planned learning opportunities in their lessons. This is particularly the case in the core curriculum of English, mathematics and science.
- School leaders know what effective teaching is and regularly discuss the quality of teaching and progress over time with their colleagues. As a result of these discussions, teachers are typically highly reflective about their practice.
- Teachers closely adhere to the school's assessment policy to ensure that pupils' work improves.
- Technology is regularly used in lessons to support learning. This helps to stimulate pupils' interest and builds their enthusiasm.
- Literacy is well planned and taught across the curriculum. There is a culture of reading for pleasure and all pupils carry suitable fiction books with them. The teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling is well integrated into both key stages.
- Pupils who find work challenging in core subjects are supported effectively through small group sessions to help them to build on their understanding. In some cases, notably in mathematics, these interventions take place on the same day that the problem is spotted by the teacher. This rapid response is highly effective in building pupils' confidence and helping them to progress.
- The most able pupils are challenged in lessons. They are set appropriate work and are given ample opportunities to contribute orally in response to teachers' questions, as well as when completing group work.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are well supported by the members of staff responsible for their welfare. However, in some lessons, teachers do not meet their specific needs. As a result, some pupils struggle to access the learning activities set for them.

- Some lower-ability pupils are not supported effectively in all lessons. Sometimes the work set by teachers is too challenging for them and, as a result, they make limited progress in completing the work.
- The quality of teaching in foundation subjects, particularly when taught by non-specialists, is not as good as that in the core curriculum. Learning resources are not consistently planned carefully enough to help all pupils to make good progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Ryecroft pupils typically present themselves as confident and friendly. Inspectors were frequently approached informally by pupils who wanted to speak positively about their experience at school.
- Pupils all know what to do if they see or experience bullying. Pupils are adamant that bullying is very rare at this school.
- There are a wide variety of ways in which pupils can develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. For instance, the school organises external speakers and a variety of trips and visits, and also plans for relevant opportunities in the curriculum.
- Pupils collaborate particularly well in lessons. They respect each other's opinions and feel confident to answer questions in lessons. They relish the opportunity to discuss their work.
- Transition from first schools in Year 5, and progression on to high school at the end of Year 8, is very well managed. This helps pupils to settle quickly at Ryecroft when they join and also ensures that they feel ready to leave at the end of their time at the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils enjoy school, typically want to learn and conduct themselves sensibly and with enthusiasm.
- The rewards system used by the school is well understood by pupils. This helps to motivate them to attend regularly, participate fully in lessons and produce good-quality written work.
- Pupils wear their uniform smartly and with pride. They move sensibly, quietly and cheerfully around corridors and show respect for one another.
- There are a range of activities to participate in during break and lunchtime. When enjoying leisure time together, pupils are well supervised and act respectfully towards both their peers and the adults responsible for their care.

- Disruptions to learning in lessons are rare and are effectively dealt with by teachers using the well-developed school behaviour system.
- The attendance of pupils is high. Very few pupils are persistently absent. Pupils move swiftly between lessons and clearly understand the importance of being punctual.
- Although the vast majority of staff agree that behaviour is good, a minority of parents and pupils report that low-level disruptions to learning do occur.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Following key stage 2 test results that were below floor standards in 2014 and 2015, there was some improvement in 2016 and then considerable improvement in 2017. Pupils' progress is now in line with that of other pupils nationally and their attainment was above national averages in 2017 key stage 2 assessments.
- The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 increased markedly from 2016 to 2017.
- Pupils' performance in the key stage 2 grammar, punctuation and spelling test also improved with more than three quarters of pupils meeting the expected standard in 2017, up from two thirds in 2016.
- The current progress in key stage 2 is strong and pupils are showing good development in their skills in the key areas of the curriculum. The improvements seen in 2017 have been secured for those pupils currently learning in this key stage.
- Pupils' progress is particularly strong in key stage 3 mathematics. Teachers' assessment of these pupils, supported by external moderation, shows that they are making faster progress than that which is typical nationally. Progress in English and science is currently in line with that of other pupils nationally.
- Work in pupils' books provides clear evidence of their improving progress over time. They complete appropriate work and securely develop understanding.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress in both key stages 2 and 3. Most-able disadvantaged pupils also achieve well.
- Most-able pupils achieve well as lessons successfully meet their learning needs. The proportions of pupils meeting the higher standard in key stage 2 tests in 2017 were above those typically seen nationally.
- The progress made by pupils in some foundation subjects is less secure. In particular, lower-ability pupils can struggle to make good progress in some subjects, as teaching is not adjusted to meet their specific needs.
- Support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is not yet fully consistent across all lessons. Although the progress of these pupils is improving, more needs to be done to ensure that learning materials are adjusted to suit their specific needs.

School details

Unique reference number	124450
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10037879

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joe Bednall
Headteacher	Rachael Baramuszcak
Telephone number	01889 590394
Website	http://ryecroft.staffs.sch.uk
Email address	office@ryecroft.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 February 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 2 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2016. She was initially supported by an executive headteacher until April 2017.
- The school moved to an attractive new purpose-built campus in September 2016.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below average.
- The school does not use any alternative provision for its pupils.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics for pupils by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 20 lessons in order to help evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time.
- An inspector heard a selection of pupils read. The inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work in their books and spoke to pupils about their work and progress in a number of subjects.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at break and lunchtime as well as in lessons, and as they moved around the school campus. In addition, inspectors met with groups of pupils from all year groups to hear about their experience of school life.
- Inspectors considered responses from 97 pupils and 16 staff to the Ofsted questionnaires.
- Meetings were held with teachers, senior leaders, heads of department and staff responsible for pastoral care.
- The lead inspector met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body, and the local authority representative.
- The opinions of parents were considered through 37 responses on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, as well as 18 free-text responses and informal conversations held with parents before school.
- Various school documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation, development plans, information about managing teachers' performance and external reviews carried out by the local authority. Information about pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safety was also analysed.

Inspection team

Thomas Walton, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Julie Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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