

Inspection of a good school: The Rudheath Senior Academy

Middlewich Road, Rudheath, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 7DT

Inspection dates: 11 to 12 January 2023

Outcome

The Rudheath Senior Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This school is a friendly and welcoming community. Staff know the pupils well and ensure that they are well cared for. The vast majority of pupils are happy and feel safe at school.

Leaders have high expectations for what pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), can achieve. All pupils study the full curriculum. Pupils work hard and behave well in lessons. Teachers help pupils to do their best.

Staff expect high standards of behaviour. Most pupils behave well around the school. They are respectful to school staff and get on well with one another. When bullying occurs, staff deal with it well. Pupils told inspectors that they can speak to staff about any worries they have. A small number of pupils need help to improve their behaviour. Staff support them well.

Through the school's 'education with character' programme, pupils are taught to respect one another and value diversity. Pupils can be themselves. Their attitudes reflect the school value of kindness. Many pupils are involved in the clubs and activities that are on offer. Older pupils value the opportunities they are given to take on leadership roles and support younger pupils.

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

After a period of change, the new leadership team and those responsible for governance have worked hard to provide stability and further develop the quality of education that the school provides.

All pupils, including pupils with SEND, benefit from an ambitious curriculum. Pupils in key stage 3 study a wide variety of subjects. They make well-informed choices about their courses in key stage 4. The proportion of pupils studying languages as part of the English Baccalaureate is lower than leaders would like. Leaders are increasing the number of teachers of languages to address this issue.

Leaders have carefully considered the most important knowledge that pupils need to remember. They have designed the curriculum so that pupils learn knowledge in well-ordered steps.

Lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They explain subject content clearly and take time to show pupils how to complete a task well. Teachers check where pupils are secure in their learning and where they might need more help. As a result, pupils acquire a wide range of knowledge.

In a small number of subjects, improvements in the curriculum and in teaching are relatively recent. This means that some older pupils have gaps in their knowledge in these subjects. Teachers provide additional support to pupils to help fill these gaps.

Leaders prioritise reading. They choose the books pupils read at school with care. Pupils enjoy listening to adults read each week. In lessons, pupils are taught important vocabulary. Some pupils arrive at the school struggling to read. Leaders make sure that pupils receive additional help to help them to read more fluently. However, pupils who are behind in their phonics knowledge are not getting the specialist help they need.

Leaders identify the needs of pupils with SEND effectively. They give teachers the information they need to support pupils well in lessons. Teachers put this advice into practice and pupils learn well.

The school's personal, social and health education programme is comprehensive. Leaders ensure it is complemented by assemblies and form time activities. Leaders support pupils' health and well-being. For example, pupils and staff spend time eating together at lunchtime. Pupils receive effective careers advice and are helped to make the right choices for their future education.

Staff are proud to work at this school. They feel valued and supported by leaders. Leaders understand the workload pressure on staff. They have introduced a number of initiatives to improve staff well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong safeguarding culture. They ensure that staff are well trained to identify risks to pupils. Staff use this training well and report any concerns promptly. Leaders are quick to ensure that pupils get the help they need, including by seeking support from other agencies.

Leaders ensure that pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe. They are taught about how to talk about any concerns they have.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, changes to the curriculum and improvements in the consistency of teaching are relatively recent. The legacy of this is that some older pupils have gaps in their knowledge. Leaders should ensure that pupils have the support they need to address these gaps.
- Support for readers who are behind in their phonics knowledge is not as effective as it could be. Leaders should ensure that staff have the knowledge they need to support pupils to develop their familiarity with phonics so that they become more fluent readers.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 in January 2018.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	137582
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10256114
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	562
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Brendan Wignall
Headteacher	James Kerfoot
Website	https://rudheathsenioracademy.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	10 and 11 January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders make use of one registered alternative provider for a small number of pupils.
- Since the last inspection, this school has seen a number of changes in leadership.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, including the designated safeguarding lead and the special educational needs coordinator, middle leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of the North West Academies Trust and local governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, history and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum documentation, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors also visited a sample of lessons in a range of subjects.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for safeguarding. They reviewed a range of documentation in relation to safeguarding, including the school's pre-employment checks on staff. They spoke to staff and pupils about wider aspects of safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during breaktimes, lunchtimes, in corridors and during lessons. They spoke with pupils about bullying, behaviour and leaders' expectations of their behaviour. Inspectors also discussed pupils' programme of wider personal development.
- Inspectors considered the responses from parents to Ofsted Parent View. This included the comments submitted via the free-text facility. Inspectors also reviewed the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Stephanie Gill, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Phil Lloyd

Ofsted Inspector

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