

# Richmond Academy

Unity Street, Sheerness, Kent ME12 2ET

## Inspection dates

30–31 January 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Early years provision	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' test results at the end of key stages 1 and 2 in 2018 were well below national averages. A much smaller proportion of pupils than found nationally achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check.
- The proportion of children who achieved a good level of development in the early years was well below the national average.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent. Current pupils do not make enough progress when teaching does not meet their needs. As a result, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and the most able, are not well enough prepared for their next steps.
- Too many pupils are regularly absent from school. Consequently, they miss important parts of their learning and struggle to catch up.

### The school has the following strengths

- Officers and trustees of The Stour Academy Trust have high expectations and are relentless in securing the necessary improvements. They are systematically reversing past weaknesses and creating a culture of achievement in the school.
- The headteacher has brought stability and a renewed sense of ambition to the school. She has won the confidence of staff, pupils and many parents and carers with her clarity of vision and openness.
- Pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum and a range of extra-curricular activities. Leaders ensure that pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders provide effective support for teachers, many of whom are new to the school and the profession. Teachers are proud to work in the school and benefit from high-quality training.
- Arrangements for keeping pupils safe are exceptionally strong. Vulnerable pupils and their families receive timely and effective support.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eliminate inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that teachers:
  - use assessment of pupils' progress to build on what pupils already know, understand and can do
  - challenge all pupils, particularly the most able pupils, to think deeply and explain what they have learned
  - share the good practice that already exists more widely.
- Improve pupils' progress in English and mathematics so that all pupils, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged, achieve in line with other pupils nationally.
- Ensure that overall rates of attendance match the national average for primary schools.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Since becoming the school's sponsor in January 2017, officers and trustees of The Stour Academy Trust have wasted no time in getting to grips with the many issues that confronted them on their arrival. The chief executive officer (CEO) has overseen a transformation in the culture of the school, raising expectations and putting in place new leadership, policies and procedures.
- The trust's declared aim to improve pupils' outcomes and promote their well-being is evident in all that the headteacher and her leadership team do. Aply supported by the deputy CEO, she has brought much-needed stability to the school since her appointment in April 2017. Behaviour has improved, safeguarding has been strengthened and pupils now follow a well-planned, broad and balanced curriculum.
- Leaders at all levels are passionate about the school, knowledgeable about their roles and relentless in driving through the agreed priorities. They provide effective support to teachers in classrooms, and help pupils to do better in their learning.
- Teachers, almost all of whom started at the school in September 2018, and some of whom are new to the profession, are proud to work at the school. They feel well supported by leaders, who they believe care for their well-being. One member of staff who responded to Ofsted's online survey wrote, 'The leadership team are endlessly supportive and treat staff with respect. They have put in place an excellent work-life balance and always make time for their staff.'
- The school and trust provide time and opportunities for teachers to update their skills. For example, teachers moderate their assessment of pupils' work with colleagues from other trust schools and benefit from training sessions led by experts from a local university.
- Leaders rightly recognise the importance of a challenging and engaging curriculum. To date, leaders have successfully put in place a broad, balanced curriculum which includes an appropriately structured approach to English, mathematics and science. Leaders recognise that the wider curriculum requires further development, and they have credible plans to further strengthen schemes of work and assessment in a range of subjects.
- The sponsoring trust has issued a 'pledge' to parents to provide pupils with a range of free extra-curricular experiences during their time in school. Although the initiative is a recent one, pupils in various year groups have already had the chance to carry out night walks, visit a local farm, and watch a women's football match at Wembley Stadium.
- Pupils are prepared positively for life in modern Britain. Through assemblies and in lessons, pupils learn about British values, different cultures and religions and about the importance of treating others as equals. In addition, the English curriculum, based on high-quality reading books, enables pupils to imagine other people's lives and understand their emotions.
- Leaders are keenly aware of the need to improve outcomes for all pupils, in particular disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, leaders are assiduous in identifying barriers to

learning and basing decisions about spending the pupil premium on evidence of what has worked elsewhere. They are becoming increasingly effective in monitoring the impact of actions taken.

- Leaders rightly recognise the value of sport and physical activity. As well as supporting the physical education (PE) curriculum, leaders use the PE and sport premium to fund a wide range of physical fitness activities outside lessons, including competitive sport.
- Officers from the trust and school leaders use additional funding appropriately to put in place the necessary support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). For example, the special educational needs coordinator has submitted several applications for education, health and care plans, and is awaiting confirmation of these. However, leaders also recognise that the process of identifying pupils' specific needs is not yet complete, partly because adequate records were not available when the school joined the trust in 2017. Some parents expressed frustration at the current provision for their children's special educational needs.
- Many parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, commented positively on the improvements that have been made to the school. One wrote, 'The school has got a lot better since the headteacher arrived and it is continuing to get better every day.' However, a small number of parents expressed ongoing concerns about behaviour and bullying.

## **Governance of the school**

- Trustees have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have an appropriate range of skills and experiences and they exercise strong oversight of the school's ethos, standards and finances.
- Trustees are impatient to see outcomes improve. At the same time, they are rightly concerned to ensure that improvements are sustainable and not simply 'quick fixes'.
- The trust has very recently put in place new arrangements for local governance. A cluster committee, chaired by a very experienced governor who knows the school well, and who also chaired the previous local academy board, oversees a local 'hub' of three primary schools. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this model on the school, but it is already apparent that the cluster committee receives accurate information from leaders and provides stringent challenge in return.
- Committee members do not take what leaders tell them at face value. They conduct focused visits to the school to gather first-hand evidence. The cluster chair also checks safeguarding arrangements.
- Members of the cluster committee take their own training seriously, including for safeguarding.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Governors ensure that pupils' safety and well-being have a high priority. They check that all child protection policies and procedures are followed. Consequently, there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school.

- Checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children are carried out to a high standard. Staff benefit from regular training on all aspects of safeguarding, including the 'Prevent' duty and child sexual exploitation. Staff accept and understand their safeguarding responsibilities. They know what signs to look for and understand the school's procedures for reporting concerns.
- The school's designated leaders for safeguarding have undertaken relevant, high-level training. They are knowledgeable, and care deeply about the welfare of pupils in the school and their families. They make highly effective use of modern technology to keep meticulous records of all child protection concerns.
- Systems for identifying pupils who may be at risk of harm are well established and leaders put in place timely support for those who need it. Leaders work closely with a range of external agencies and are tenacious in ensuring that referrals are followed up. They do not shy away from challenging external partners if they do not feel the right actions are being taken or the right support put in place.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school is improving rapidly but remains variable. Over time, pupils have not been challenged to work as hard as they could or to achieve in line with their potential. As a result, too few pupils have made enough progress in their learning to reach the standards expected for their age.
- Teachers' planning does not always take sufficient account of pupils' needs. Consequently, work is not always pitched at the correct level, particularly for the most able. These pupils do not make enough progress because their learning is limited by the tasks they are given to complete.
- Where teaching over time is less effective, expectations are too low. Teachers' questions focus on simple recall. Teachers too readily accept the first answer given and do not challenge pupils to expand on their answers or think more deeply. Consequently, teachers are too slow to pick up on pupils' misconceptions, particularly in mathematics.
- While relationships between pupils and teachers are generally strong, too many pupils fail to pay attention in lessons. Teachers do not tackle low-level chatter quickly enough. As a result, pupils do not complete the tasks set and so miss important learning.
- Where teaching is stronger over time, teachers are careful to take account of what pupils already know when planning schemes of work. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to give pupils tasks to do that engage their interest and make them think. Typically, teachers use questions that begin with 'how' or 'why' to require pupils to explain how they arrived at their answers.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers are keenly aware that a legacy of weak teaching in the past means that pupils have many gaps in their learning. In such cases, teachers are tenacious in identifying and correcting pupils' misconceptions and providing them with the support they need to catch up.
- Teachers follow the school's assessment policy consistently. They identify next steps for pupils and give them time to improve their work. Teachers have an accurate view

of how well pupils are doing because they have well-planned opportunities to moderate assessment with colleagues in their own and other schools.

- Pupils generally take pride in their work and present their work well. Teachers reinforce the need for pupils to take care over their work. Consequently, standards of presentation in pupils' workbooks are considerably higher than last year.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Requires improvement

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils are polite and courteous to visitors and many talk with enthusiasm about their learning, particularly in English, mathematics and PE.
- Pupils have generally positive attitudes to learning. However, where teaching over time is less effective, pupils do not concentrate on their work, distracting themselves and others from their learning.
- Leaders have worked hard in recent months to improve the number of clubs and visits available to pupils. Pupils speak with warmth about these opportunities. One Year 4 pupil vividly recalled the experience of holding a chicken during a visit to a local farm.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They know that there is always someone that they can talk to if they are worried about anything. Leaders ensure that pupils know how to stay safe. For example, pupils get frequent reminders in class and in assemblies about how to protect themselves from strangers or from cyber bullying when using the internet.
- The school caters well for pupils' physical and emotional well-being. There are extensive opportunities for pupils to take part in physical activity, including competitive sport. Pupils say that they are happy in school, but staff are ever-vigilant for any signs that a pupil may be suffering from mental distress. Staff in the nurture room support those pupils who need individual help.
- Pupils acknowledge that bullying does happen, particularly in the playground, where they say pupils are sometimes mean to each other. They say that teachers usually sort out any disagreements. However, some pupils concede that bullying carries on even after teachers have intervened. Of the 60 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, less than one third thought that the school dealt effectively with bullying. However, analysis of the school's own records shows that the frequency of bullying has reduced significantly over time.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Behaviour has improved significantly since the headteacher took up her post. The new behaviour policy is well understood by pupils, and staff enforce it consistently. Pupils like getting rewards for doing the right thing and acting in accordance with the school's values.

- Fixed-term exclusions have fallen over time but remain high. Leaders believe that this continuing high level of exclusion is partly a consequence of the higher expectations of pupils' conduct that the school now has.
- Rates of attendance are well below the average for primary schools. Similarly, the proportion of pupils who are frequently absent is much higher than that seen nationally. Leaders understand the impact that poor attendance has on pupils' outcomes and are far from complacent about it. They work closely with the local authority and share information with other schools in the area, leaving no stone unturned in their efforts to get pupils into school on time and every day. Leaders also go the extra mile and beyond to engage with families and ensure that any barriers to their children attending school are removed.
- Although overall attendance figures remain stubbornly low, there are signs that the school's relentless and patient work is paying off. A number of pupils, including several who are disadvantaged, now have much improved rates of attendance as a result of leaders' unstinting efforts.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Published outcomes for 2018 showed that pupils in key stage 2, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able, made progress from their starting points that was well below national averages in writing and mathematics. Pupils' progress in reading was stronger but remained below the national average.
- At key stage 1, pupils, including those who were disadvantaged, reached standards lower than those found nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils in Year 1 who reached the expected standard in the phonics screening check was below the national average.
- Current pupils are doing much better than last year because teaching has improved, and the curriculum is more tightly structured.
- In English, pupils are making stronger progress than previously because teachers use high-quality books to develop pupils' reading comprehension skills. Pupils also have more frequent opportunities to write at length in a variety of genres. Teachers ensure that pupils have plenty of practice in spelling, punctuation and grammar. However, as a result of weak teaching in previous years, many pupils still have a lot of ground to make up in the accuracy and quality of their writing.
- In mathematics, a well-structured curriculum gives all pupils ample practice in calculation, problem-solving and reasoning. Pupils' presentation of their work is much neater than previously, which enables teachers to pick up and correct errors more easily.
- In the wider curriculum, pupils benefit from opportunities to develop their scientific, historical, geographical, artistic and technological understanding. Where appropriate, pupils' work in these areas draws on the books they have studied in English and the concepts they have been learning in mathematics.
- Pupils are making more rapid progress from their starting points than last year. Pupils' workbooks show that, since the beginning of this academic year, disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND are making similar progress to other pupils in their class and year



group. However, most-able pupils are not making the overall progress of which they are capable because they are not given challenging enough work to do.

- In phonics, current pupils generally make strong gains because the teaching of phonics has improved since last year. However, most-able pupils do not make as much progress as they could in phonics because teaching lacks sufficient challenge.
- Leaders promote reading well. Most pupils read with fluency and expression appropriate to their age. They know what to do if they come across words they do not understand and, for the most part, talk with enthusiasm about books they have read.
- Not enough pupils are prepared well for learning in secondary school. Pupils' progress from their starting points and the standards that they achieve by the time they leave the school, while improving, remain below national averages.

### Early years provision

### Requires improvement

- Early years provision is improving. It is not yet good because, over time, the standards children reach are not high enough.
- Children enter the Nursery and Reception classes with lower starting points than are typical for their age. Outcomes for 2018 show that a much lower proportion of children in the early years achieved a good level of development than found nationally. However, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who achieved a good level of development was higher than for other pupils in the school.
- Current children in both the Nursery and Reception classes are making stronger progress than last year because teaching, while still inconsistent, is improving. The classrooms and outside areas are well resourced. Children enjoy the activities that teachers plan for them. They are supported by their teachers to make appropriate choices.
- Children benefit from increasingly well-planned opportunities to develop their early reading, writing and mathematical skills. However, in the Reception class, there are sometimes too few opportunities for children to develop independent writing skills.
- Leaders have put in place appropriate assessment arrangements. Staff gather reliable evidence of children's progress and make accurate assessments of the standards reached. Leaders also give effective support to teachers who are new to the school and profession.
- Effective provision is in place for children with SEND. While disadvantaged pupils do well in the Reception class, the needs of disadvantaged pupils in the Nursery have not yet been accurately identified.
- Children are settled, happy and safe. All welfare standards are met, including for the two-year-olds who attend the Nursery. Staff have created a warm and nurturing environment and they are alert to any risks to children's well-being or safety.
- Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour. They are polite to staff and each other at snack and meal times. They play and work together harmoniously. They are expected to put on, take off and hang up their own coats as well as tidy equipment away at the end of the morning and afternoon.



- Staff go to great pains to involve parents in their children's education, both at induction and during the year. Parents are asked to comment on children's progress reviews and to provide information on their children's development at home. Parents are also invited to visit during the school day to see their children's learning at first hand.

## School details

Unique reference number	145013
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10083811

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	426
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Fiona Trigwell
Headteacher	Helen Evemy
Telephone number	01795 662891
Website	<a href="http://www.richmond.kent.sch.uk">www.richmond.kent.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:richmond@stouracademytrust.org.uk">richmond@stouracademytrust.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school first became an academy in 2014, sponsored by Lilac Sky Schools Trust.
- In January 2017, the school transferred to The Stour Academy Trust as a sponsored academy.
- The current headteacher was appointed in April 2017. She is line managed by the chief executive officer and supported on a day-to-day basis by the deputy chief executive officer.
- Local governance is provided by a cluster committee which reports to the board of trustees.
- The school runs a breakfast club each morning, for which parents pay a daily fee.
- The Nursery includes provision for two-year-olds.
- Currently seven two-year-old children attend the Nursery.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes, jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors also reviewed pupils' learning over time by looking at a sample of pupils' work alongside leaders.
- Meetings were held with a range of senior and middle leaders to discuss the impact of their actions on those aspects of the school's work for which they were responsible.
- Inspectors spoke informally with parents at the start of both days.
- Inspectors also spoke with pupils informally and in formal meetings to discuss their views of the school.
- The lead inspector listened to a group of pupils read from books they had chosen and spoke to them about their reading.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the board of trustees and with the chair of the cluster committee.
- Inspectors took account of 22 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Sixty responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 58 written responses were evaluated.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation provided by the school, including the school's self-evaluation, the academy development plan and information about the curriculum.
- Safeguarding arrangements at the school were reviewed.

## Inspection team

Gary Holden, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Margaret Coussins	Ofsted Inspector
Yasmin Maskatiya	Her Majesty's Inspector

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