

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

Naseby Road, Alum Rock, Birmingham, West Midlands B8 3HG

Inspection dates:

29 and 30 April 2025

Outcome

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

The headteacher of this school is Richard Reeve. This school is part of the CORE Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Jo Tyler, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Tom Gibbins.

What is it like to attend this school?

Rockwood Academy is a productive and inclusive place of learning. Staff are caring and nurturing. Pupils are happy. The school has high ambitions for pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). New leaders and the trust have effective strategies in place to ensure that pupils now meet these high ambitions.

Pupils respond very well to the school's high expectations of them. This is evident in many pupils' learning and their positive behaviour. Pupils get along well with each other and staff. Pupils are confident that there is a member of staff to speak to if they are ever worried. Positive relationships further underpin this work.

Pupils experience a strong provision to enhance their personal and character development. They learn about career paths and important life lessons about equality, healthy relationships, personal safety and life in modern British society. They have a strong sense of right and wrong and state that all people are equal. Pupils hugely value these lessons. As a result, they are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.

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

Since the last inspection, the school has undergone some turbulent times. This included significant changes in staffing at all levels, which had negatively impacted on the quality

of education. Consequently, published outcomes for pupils, including disadvantaged pupils dipped in 2024. Since the appointment and establishing of the new leadership team, this decline in the quality of education has been halted and reversed. Examples of this include the new broad and balanced curriculum in all subjects and effective strategies on how best to teach it. As a result, pupils now learn the intended curriculum well, including disadvantaged pupils.

Staff know pupils and their needs well. They complete effective checks on what pupils know and can do. Generally, teachers use this information well to adapt their teaching and address any misconception or move learning on when pupils are ready. However, this is not consistent. At times, some staff do not spot quickly enough when pupils need help or are ready to learn new things. Some pupils are left waiting, which hampers their learning.

The school has clearly laid-out processes to provide support for pupils with SEND. It swiftly identifies any pupils who may need extra help. Staff receive information and helpful strategies to meet each pupil's needs in lessons. Targeted interventions help pupils to catch up. As a result, many pupils with SEND overcome their barriers to learning.

Reading is a high priority across the school. The school knows that many pupils arrive with low literacy levels. Staff identify pupils who need extra help and provide them with targeted support. Pupils learn reading skills and have many opportunities to practise these. As a result, they quickly gain the knowledge and skills needed to become confident, fluent readers. Additionally, dedicated reading and library sessions for all pupils in key stage 3 further support their exposure to rich and varied texts.

The school is a calm and orderly environment. Pupils are friendly and polite. They understand the new heightened expectations of behaviour and pupils meet these regularly. Staff work hard to address poor attendance. They know of the challenges that some pupils face in attending regularly. Key staff work closely with these pupils to overcome barriers. Despite this work and some improvements in attendance figures, there remains a significant number of pupils who are persistently absent from school. As a result, these pupils miss valuable learning time.

The programme to inform and advise pupils on career choices helps them to make informed decisions about their next steps in education, employment or training. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their next stages.

The trust and local governance provide the school with the challenge, support and resources to deliver its inclusive vision. The school has developed a programme of staff training. This provides teachers with the knowledge to carry out their roles well. Staff are complimentary about leaders and say that leaders are considerate of their well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some staff do not effectively adapt their teaching to address misconceptions swiftly enough, or, conversely, move learning on when pupils are ready to learn new things. This hampers some pupils' learning. The school should ensure that all staff have the expertise to support pupils' learning effectively.
- A significant number of pupils are persistently absent from school. As a result, these pupils miss valuable learning time. The school should ensure that they re-engage those families in education and school so that pupils attend more frequently.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in March 2016.

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	138059
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10366640
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,093
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tom Gibbins
CEO of the trust	Jo Tyler
Headteacher	Richard Reeve
Website	www.corerockwood.academy
Date of previous inspection	8 October 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Rockwood Academy is part of the CORE Education Trust.
- The school is an average-size secondary school.
- Since the last inspection, there have been a significant number of changes to staffing, including at senior leadership level.
- The school currently uses three registered alternative providers for a small number of its pupils.
- 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

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteachers, assistant headteachers and other senior leaders. The lead inspector held a meeting with representatives from the multi-academy trust, including the CEO and group CEO. Inspectors met with the school's inclusion lead, curriculum leaders and teaching staff.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector toured the school with some pupils.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 observed pupils' behaviour and interactions during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes and spoke to many pupils during the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of the parent free-text comments and the responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey. Inspectors also considered the responses to the pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Bianka Zemke, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Philip Hamilton

Ofsted Inspector

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