

Risdene Academy

Newton Road, Rushden, Northamptonshire NN10 0HH

Inspection dates

10–11 January 2017

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Since the previous inspection, school leaders, including governors, have failed to improve teaching and learning. The school's performance has declined.
- Pupils do not make the progress they should from their different starting points in English and mathematics. The progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is particularly weak.
- The most able pupils are rarely stretched sufficiently and consequently they fail to reach the high standards that they should.
- The quality of teaching across most year groups is inconsistent and weak. This has led to poor outcomes for pupils. Teachers' expectations of what pupils should be able to achieve are too low.
- Teachers do not correct pupils' misconceptions effectively.
- The curriculum taught to pupils until recently has not been fit for purpose; preparation for national assessments at key stage 2 is weak.
- Previous years' spending of special educational needs, pupil premium and sports premium funding was ineffective.
- Pupils are easily distracted in lessons and a minority show a lack of respect to adults.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is not developed well. Pupils show a limited understanding of the world, British society, other faiths and cultures. They are not prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- Subject leaders are not all skilled enough to carry out their monitoring and teacher development duties well.
- Boys do not achieve as well as girls, especially in English in key stages 1 and 2.

The school has the following strengths

- The new principal, who started in September, has brought about much-needed clarity of vision for staff. Staff, parents and pupils are very supportive of new leaders.
- The overall proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development in early years is above average across all areas of learning.
- The rigorous implementation of a new policy is helping to improve pupils' behaviour.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching across the school to accelerate the progress of pupils in mathematics, reading, writing and science, especially the most able, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, by:
 - raising the expectations of what pupils, especially the most able, are capable of achieving in lessons
 - dealing promptly with pupils' misconceptions
 - providing carefully planned activities and high-quality support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - ensuring that the most-able mathematicians are regularly provided with challenging problems to apply their skills
 - developing pupils' extended writing skills, especially in key stage 1
 - teaching reading comprehension skills effectively
 - improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes in lessons so that they are consistently positive, especially in Years 1 to 4
 - ensuring that teachers' assessment practices are reliable and well understood by staff and pupils.
- Improve pupils' behaviour, personal development and welfare by:
 - developing existing strategies to support pupils at risk of exclusion
 - creating more opportunities for pupils to take on roles of responsibility
 - improving pupils' understanding of the world and the society in which they live, including faiths, cultures and communities other than their own, to prepare them well for life in modern Britain
 - building on current work to improve pupils' conduct, attitudes and respect for others.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by:
 - implementing and monitoring an effective curriculum, across all subjects, to meet the challenges of the current national assessment framework
 - monitoring pupils' workbooks more rigorously to check the effectiveness of teaching for all groups of pupils
 - equipping subject leaders with the skills to carry out their monitoring duties and teacher development activities effectively

- ensuring that pupils’ assessment information is moderated effectively to ensure its reliability
- reviewing the effectiveness of the school’s use of special educational needs funding and the quality of leadership of this area
- improving the quality of communication and engagement with parents
- implementing and regularly evaluating the pupil premium and the sports premium spending strategies
- developing the wider extra curriculum to enhance pupils’ skills and interests
- ensuring that the principal is supported well by a strong and effective senior leadership team
- ensuring that governance at all levels is strong and effective enough to challenge school leaders and hold them to account for the school’s progress
- strengthening strategies to improve pupils’ reading skills and enjoyment.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Following the last inspection, leaders and managers at all levels, including the sponsor, did not tackle the weaknesses identified and so improve the school's effectiveness. A large number of pupils, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, have not made the progress they should have from their different starting points. Those who left the school at the end of Year 6 were not prepared well for secondary education.
- Teachers' practice has not been monitored consistently since the last inspection. Consequently, poor teaching persisted for too long, which has led to poor outcomes for many pupils. Teachers' skills, therefore, had not kept up with the demands of the new curriculum. The new leadership of teaching, in place since September, is addressing this weakness. Teaching is now checked more frequently. There are promising signs that the quality of teaching, for some, is improving.
- Leaders were slow to implement the new national curriculum across the school. This meant that pupils were not being properly prepared for assessments set at the end of Years 2 and 6.
- Additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and for sport development was largely used ineffectively last year. The funding did not improve achievement, skills or increase significantly participation levels in sporting activities.
- Leaders of special educational needs and/or disabilities do not have a clear grasp of the impact of support strategies on outcomes for pupils. The new principal's oversight of this area of the school has led to improved multi-agency support.
- The curriculum to support pupils' understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues is limited. Pupils' knowledge of other cultures and faiths is patchy, despite recent efforts to help pupils gain first-hand experience of religious practices other than their own. The curriculum does not help pupils to guard against extremist ideologies sufficiently; pupils rarely participate in democratic practices such as debating and elections. The term 'British values' is not prominent in the curriculum, although pupils show respect and tolerance of others.
- The school's provision for pupils to develop their wider interests, sports and leadership skills outside of lessons has been limited, especially in recent months. The school council has yet to be formed. There are few clubs after school and pupils do not participate in after-school sports as much as they used to. The school has appointed a lunchtime sports coach recently, which has helped to bring more structure to pupils' free-time play.
- Leaders of behaviour and attendance have been successful in reducing absence levels, especially for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The number of behaviour incidents spiked during the last term as a result of implementing the new behaviour system. A few pupils have found it difficult to adjust to the higher standards of behaviour expected in the school. The rate of exclusion from school remains higher than the national average. Recent work to

improve the behaviour of pupils at risk of exclusion is showing early signs of impact.

- Parents are very positive about the new leadership of the school. However, some parents comment that they would like to be more involved in the school. Some parents say that they would prefer clearer communication between home and school about their child's progress.
- Senior leaders have ensured that the external support provided for underperforming teachers and those who are newly qualified has been effective. Therefore, I recommend that the school may appoint further newly qualified teachers.
- The school has struggled to recruit suitably qualified and high-quality teachers in recent years. Pupils, therefore, have been subject to a series of temporary teachers, a situation to which some pupils have found difficult to adjust. Mathematics specialists have been the most difficult to recruit.
- The new principal has been effective in communicating a clear vision for staff and pupils. These messages are reinforced through regular training sessions. Pupils and staff are now in no doubt about the high expectations of behaviour and progress across the school. The new principal has put together a coherent plan of action to implement improved systems for managing most aspects of the school. She enjoys high levels of support from parents, pupils and staff.

Governance of the school

- The governance of the school is shared between the academy advisory board (AAB), which is the local governing body, and the trust. The trust has overall responsibility for the school's progress and development. This governance structure has not been effective in ensuring good progress of the school since the last inspection. This was due to the lack of skilled capacity among governors to hold school leaders to account. The communication between the AAB and the executive board of the trust was poor, which led to an inaccurate and overgenerous view of the school's performance.
- The AAB has taken important steps to review its effectiveness. As a result of an external review, it has reconstituted and members have undertaken additional training to ensure that governors understand the new assessment systems to measure pupils' progress. New recruits to the AAB have added much-needed skills and experience to the board.
- Recent minutes of the AAB show that members of the AAB are now asking challenging questions of school leaders. The new principal is providing governors with clearer and more accurate information about the school's progress.
- Governors have put in place a clear monitoring schedule. The governors assigned to support and challenge subject areas are beginning to monitor the school's work more systematically.
- The trust has not ensured that the website is compliant with government guidance, especially in respect of providing clear information about the governance structures and the scheme of delegation.
- The trust has made astute recruitment decisions recently, especially at senior level. Much-needed support for the new principal is now being put into place. The trust and the AAB acknowledge that unless this support is strengthened and sustained at senior level, it is unlikely that school improvement plans will be successfully implemented.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The safeguarding leaders of the school are suitably trained and have ensured that systems to monitor and support pupils who are subject to child protection are effective. The records are meticulously kept.
- Recruitment procedures follow safer recruitment practices in the main. As a result of the inspection, leaders have sharpened up their systems for checking new applicants further.
- Records for bullying, including prejudiced-based incidents, show that these types of behaviour are relatively rare. When bullying concerns are raised, staff deal with the perpetrator firmly and the victim sensitively. A very small minority of older pupils, who had previously poor experiences of staff not dealing with their concerns, say that they feel more confident to report their concerns this year. Strategies are now in place to monitor these pupils' well-being and to reassure them that their concerns are taken seriously.
- The curriculum to support safeguarding is beginning to be strengthened. Leaders are aware of the current gaps in the programme of study in each key stage. Pupils are confident about how to keep safe on the internet. While pupils do not understand the term 'extremism', they are taught to be tolerant and respectful of other people's views, opinions and faiths. Governors monitor safeguarding practices rigorously. Parents, staff and pupils agree that the school is a safe place.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching is not sufficiently strong across subjects to address the legacy of weak teaching and the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve are too low in most year groups.
- Teachers miss opportunities to correct pupils' misconceptions. In the short regular practice sessions, designed to improve pupils' comprehension skills and arithmetic skills, pupils were observed making similar errors each week. Pupils' self- and peer-marking practices often serve to reinforce misconceptions.
- Teachers' advice and feedback to pupils on how they can make better progress are not consistently helpful.
- The introduction of new mathematics and guided reading sessions in key stage 2 have proved effective in giving pupils greater practice in basic reading comprehension and arithmetic skills. However, the work set is not consistently appropriate for the most-able readers and mathematicians. These pupils are often having to complete unchallenging tasks and are forced to wait for some of their peers to catch up. This has slowed their progress.
- Pupils in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2 do not practise their extended writing skills sufficiently. Pupils' workbooks show that teachers do not routinely encourage pupils to complete their extended writing tasks, so work is left unfinished and pupils' skills remain underdeveloped.
- Teachers have not yet been fully successful in instilling confidence and independence

in some boys. Their learning is often hampered by poor concentration and lack of confidence to have a go at new or challenging tasks. This was evidenced in both key stage 1 and key stage 2.

- Teachers are becoming much more aware of pupils' different abilities and gaps in their learning as a result of improved systems of tracking progress. Where teachers consider these identified needs well, and plan accordingly, pupils make rapid progress and lessons are enjoyable.
- Phonic teaching is largely successful in Year 1. In Year 2, teaching is improving. Teachers are becoming more skilled in helping pupils to develop their phonic skills and use practical devices, such as the mini-whiteboards, more effectively. However, weaker readers in Year 6 show a distinct lack of knowledge about how to decode unfamiliar words. Teachers do not listen to pupils read enough to pick up on some pupils' inaccurate reading skills.
- Teachers' assessments are not sufficiently reliable. The school has only recently begun working with other schools to moderate assessments. The disparity between mathematics teacher assessments and pupils' actual outcomes at key stage 2 was wide in 2016.
- The quality of teaching and support by teaching assistants is improving but inconsistent. Some teaching assistants, especially those supporting older pupils, show a good understanding of the subject taught and ask good questions to develop pupils' understanding. Less-effective teaching assistants, in lower years, were observed completing work for pupils and not correcting errors in pupils' misconceptions.
- The quality of teaching, in most subjects other than mathematics and English, is weak and irregular. There has been no teaching of science in Year 6 since the start of term, despite the duty to assess pupils' performance in this subject. Subject leaders for foundation subjects are only now implementing a new curriculum to support teaching in these subjects.
- The school has adopted a policy to set minimum homework tasks for pupils. Project work and spellings are set regularly. While pupils are meant to read at home weekly, this is rarely checked by teachers. Pupils say that they do not receive regular homework for mathematics; there are few chances for pupils to practise, revise and learn their basic arithmetic knowledge and skills in time for weekly tests.
- Newly qualified teachers are improving their practice, as result of well-directed support.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Some pupils' attitudes to their learning are not consistently positive. Some boys lack resilience and so become distracted in lessons easily. This has contributed to their underperformance in national tests.
- Pupils show a limited understanding of the world around them. Older pupils have not had regular experience of democratic processes such as discussion and debate. The

school council is not functioning at present.

- Pupils' understanding of other faiths and cultures is beginning to be promoted more successfully. Pupils have participated in two world faith days, during which they looked at the differences and similarities between different religions. In the autumn term, pupils celebrated Diwali. Pupils are respectful of other faiths and cultures.
- Younger pupils are adamant that bullying is rare. They say that some pupils 'fall out' with one another, but generally get on well. The vast majority of older pupils concur with this view, as do the pupils who responded to the online survey. Cyber bullying is dealt with seriously in the school. A very small number of pupils in Year 6, known to leaders, have expressed negative views of their previous experience of bullying in the school. These pupils are now more confident that their current class teachers will support them.
- Pupils show a good level of confidence in keeping themselves safe online. Mobile phone use in school is restricted.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- A new behaviour policy has been implemented since September. Pupils are positive about its impact. Pupils are clear that the policy is adhered to by staff consistently. Due to the higher expectations this year, some pupils have found it difficult to adjust. As a result, the number of behaviour sanctions given to a small minority of boys has increased.
- The exclusions rates are higher than national averages.
- Behaviour incident logs show that pupils' behaviour in lessons, especially those led by temporary teachers, is not always good. Inspectors noted that a few pupils lacked good skills in how to conduct themselves appropriately and respectfully around adults, especially at breaktimes and in corridors.
- Pupils attendance is much improved compared to previous years, as a result of focused support for families and pupils. Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have improved their attendance. Overall attendance is now above the national average.
- A small number of pupils who have been at risk of exclusions are benefiting from specific support sessions to help them manage their behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- The difference in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils nationally is not diminishing at either key stage 1 or key stage 2, in reading writing and mathematics. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities underachieve compared to other pupils from similar starting points across all year groups.
- Boys' achievement continues to lag behind girls', especially in English.
- Almost no pupils reached the highest standards in reading, writing and mathematics in the 2016 key stage 2 tests. The most able pupils, including the most able

disadvantaged pupils, did not reach the high standards of which they were capable. Current assessments suggest that pupils from these groups continue to underachieve.

- Pupils achieved significantly lower scores than their national peers in spelling, punctuation and grammar assessments in 2016 and 2015.
- Mathematics and reading outcomes have been consistently low across most year groups and in national tests previously. The lack of stable teaching, and specialist leadership, in mathematics has contributed to this underperformance.
- Pupils' outcomes in science are below national averages. Typically, pupils have had few opportunities to embed and extend their learning through investigations or experiments. The curriculum in other subjects, such as art, French and humanities, has not been fully developed. Recent staff training in physical education is improving teaching and helping pupils to develop a broader range of physical skills.
- Currently, pupils in Years 1, 3 and 4 are not making the progress that they should in English and mathematics. Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities continue to make slow progress. This is a legacy of previous poor teaching, which has resulted in considerable gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills.
- The work in pupils' workbooks in Year 1 does not reflect the high standards that they reached at the end of Reception. Transition work from early years to Year 1 has not been successful. Currently, pupils in key stage 1 are not reaching age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check has consistently been above average. However, too few pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in Year 1 go on to achieve it in Year 2.
- The school has not engendered a successful reading culture across all age groups. Pupils are not used to reading to adults, and progress in their reading skills is not monitored well enough, especially at key stage 2. As a result, some pupils continue to make mistakes in their reading and comprehension. Older pupils show a lack of skills in using their phonetic knowledge to read unfamiliar words. Some pupils, who find reading difficult, are provided with books that are too difficult, and the most-able readers are not encouraged to enjoy reading in their free time. Reading diaries are not checked by teachers regularly. Pupils are restricted in the type of reading materials they are allowed to read. Current guided reading sessions are not consistently effective for all ability groups.
- Due to low outcomes at the end of Year 6, pupils who left the school in 2016 were not well prepared well for the next stage of their education.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Teachers and leaders are improving the provision in early years. However, there remain a number of areas requiring further development. The principal's evaluation of the weaknesses in the early years is accurate.
- The strategies to ensure that pupils are provided with meaningful activities to develop

their skills in all areas of the early years curriculum are beginning to make a difference, especially to boys' learning and development. However, girls' achievement in all areas of development continues to outstrip that of boys.

- Pupils' concentration skills are improving, although some children, especially boys, find it difficult to sustain their interest when working without direct adult supervision or when they choose their own activities. New support teachers in the early years are not fully skilled to engage pupils effectively by using appropriate questioning and prompts.
- Teachers in the early years have introduced new electronic learning journals to record children's progress. Teachers are involving parents more in their child's learning compared to previous years. Parents welcome this development.
- The new early years leader has strengthened the systems to check the progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils are now making improved progress across a range of development areas.
- The outdoor provision has been redesigned. Pupils now have greater access and respond positively to the activities that support their reading, writing and mathematics skills.
- The overall proportion of children achieving a good level of development is above average and improving since the last inspection. However, boys' achievement, while increasing, continues to lag behind that of girls in communication and language, literacy and mathematics.
- The children's good level of development is not effectively built upon by Year 1 teachers. Work to support the effective transition between the Reception Year and the main school has been weak since the last inspection. Leaders recognise this, and they have developed their practice to ensure that children settle well and make better progress when they move to Year 1.
- The early years leader is skilled and knowledgeable. She has brought about many improvements since she started in September.

School details

Unique reference number	139757
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10026306

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	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	310
Appropriate authority	Education Fellowship Trust
Chair	Christine Goodwin
Principal	Miss Kerry Mills
Telephone number	01933 353761
Website	www.risdene-academy.net
Email address	head@risdene-academy.net
Date of previous inspection	2–3 June 2015

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the governance structure and details about membership, pupil premium and PE and sports premium funding on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about governance structures, including the scheme of delegation, on its website.
- The school has been a sponsored by The Education Fellowship Trust since 2013. The principal has been in post since September 2016. The vice-principal who started in September 2016 has left the school. The previous principal has taken up a post within The Education Fellowship and the previous vice principal has taken up a post within another academy trust school. The school is a larger than average-sized primary school. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly higher than the national average. A smaller proportion of pupils than seen nationally are supported through an education, health and care plan.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- In 2015, the school met the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 parts of lessons. Four groups of pupils were formally interviewed and 10 pupils were heard reading across all key stages. Considerably more pupils were spoken with informally in lessons and during lunch and breaktimes.
- Inspectors met with a range of school leaders and teachers, including the principal, leaders in charge of special educational needs and some subject leaders. The lead HMI met with three members of the AAB and also met with the chief executive officer of the Education Fellowship Trust and the leader of excellence from the trust.
- Inspectors examined a range of school documentation including, the school's self-evaluation document, the school's action plan, behaviour incident logs, governors' minutes, training and development records and safeguarding records.
- Inspectors considered 19 responses from Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, 15 to the free text provision and the school's own parent surveys. Inspectors also considered 29 responses from the pupils' questionnaire and 10 responses from the staff survey.

Inspection team

Zarina Connolly, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jane Green	Ofsted Inspector
Daniel Burton	Her Majesty's Inspector
Graham Marshall	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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