

Inspection of a good school: The Robert Smyth Academy

Burnmill Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire LE16 7JG

Inspection dates:

29 and 30 November 2022

Outcome

The Robert Smyth Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy to attend this school, where they are encouraged to be prepared, be kind and work hard. Leaders have high expectations for every pupil, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils live up to these expectations by behaving well and working hard in their lessons. On the rare occasions when low-level disruption occurs, staff deal with it quickly. Relationships between pupils and staff are positive.

Pupils feel safe. They know that they have someone to talk to if they are worried and staff who will support them. Pupils understand that problems sometimes occur between friends. They say that staff deal promptly with bullying when pupils report it. Pupils are well cared for. Pastoral support is a strength of the school. Leaders have worked effectively with parents and carers to ensure that pupil attendance rates are high following the pandemic.

Pupils value the opportunities that staff provide for them outside of lessons. These activities broaden pupils' horizons and deepen their understanding of the world. For example, pupils take part in a wide range of visits, sports and music clubs. They are keen to contribute to their local community through fundraising events.

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

Leaders have put a high-quality curriculum in place that is ambitious for all pupils. They make sure that pupils study a broad range of subjects. A wide choice of courses is also available to students in the sixth form. Leaders have made improvements to the curriculum in the past few years. They have identified exactly what pupils need to learn in each subject. Teachers are clear about what they need to teach. In a small number of subjects, curriculum thinking is not as advanced. In these subjects, the development of some parts of the subject curriculum is not considered fully.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. This helps pupils learn well, including students in the sixth form. Teachers break down new information and present it clearly in ways that pupils understand. They provide pupils with regular opportunities to memorise important learning before moving on. 'Do now' activities at the start of each lesson are well thought out and help pupils recall knowledge. Teachers make sure that pupils build and deepen their understanding, including students in the sixth form.

Teachers check consistently that pupils understand what they have learned. This helps teachers identify what pupils need to revisit. However, some teachers do not use this information well enough to re-explain ideas or address pupils' misconceptions.

Reading support has been securely established by leaders. Pupils who need help with reading get it from the time they join in Year 7. Leaders ensure that these pupils build reading fluency quickly so that they can access the curriculum. Tutor time and individual reading initiatives contribute to the school's culture of reading for pleasure. Sixth-form students support younger pupils with their reading. Teachers make sure that pupils learn key vocabulary within each subject.

Pupils with SEND are well supported. Leaders identify the needs of these pupils accurately. They provide teachers with clear guidance about how best to support these pupils. As a result, pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as their peers.

Pupils behave very well in lessons. During lesson change-over times and at breaktimes the school is calm and orderly. Pupils are polite, listen carefully to teachers and follow instructions. Leaders communicate high behaviour expectations clearly to pupils. Staff uphold these standards. Clear routines are well established in lessons. This allows teachers to focus on teaching, almost always without interruption.

There is a large programme of enrichment activities for pupils to enjoy. These activities provide learning opportunities that broaden pupils' experiences. Pupils like attending the many clubs, including participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Leaders provide a strong careers advice programme for pupils. All year groups have opportunities to hear from a range of employers. They also receive impartial guidance about career options.

Leaders, trustees and governors know the school well. They focus closely on school improvement. The school provides a range of valuable subject and leadership training for staff. Staff, including early-career teachers, appreciate this. Trust-wide support enhances these training opportunities. Senior leaders are mindful of staff workload and supportive of their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. Leaders, including governors, are diligent in how they protect pupils from risk of potential harm.

Staff are well trained. They receive regular updates on the school's policies and procedures to safeguard children. School procedures are robust.

Experienced leaders know when to offer support to families or when to refer them to external agencies for more specialist support. Recruitment processes are managed effectively.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. They are taught age-appropriate information about healthy relationships, consent and sexual harassment.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, some aspects of the curriculum are not thought out as fully as in other subjects. This is a barrier to some pupils knowing more and remembering more. Leaders should ensure that teachers are clear about the specific knowledge and skills pupils need to master and remember before moving on to new learning.
- Checks on pupils' previous learning are not used effectively by some teachers to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. This hinders teachers' ability to address pupils' misconceptions or pick up on any missed learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers use information they gather about what pupils know to plan pupils' next learning steps precisely.

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 September 2017.

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	137161
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10241703
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1174
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	317
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Peter Rock
Principal	Dan Cleary
Website	www.robertsmyth.tgacademy.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	12 and 13 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The principal joined the school in 2018.
- New curriculum leaders have been appointed in a range of subjects since the last inspection.
- The school makes use of six alternative providers, one of which is unregistered.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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.
- Inspectors met with the principal, senior leaders, governors, including the chair of the local governing body, and the chair of trustees, the chief executive officer and executive principal of the Tudor Grange Academies Trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, history and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, discussed curriculum thinking with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with leaders, members of staff and pupils to evaluate the arrangements for safeguarding in school. They looked at records of actions taken by leaders to protect pupils at risk. They also reviewed bullying records. Inspectors checked whether members of staff understood the safeguarding policy and procedures. They checked whether pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including online.
- Inspectors spoke informally with pupils at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors met formally with groups of pupils across the full age range.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents who responded to the confidential questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. They evaluated the views of staff and pupils from Ofsted's online questionnaires.

Inspection team

Jamie Clarke, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
John Harrison	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Burton	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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