

Inspection of Iceni Secondary Academy

Stoke Road, Methwold, Thetford, Norfolk IP26 4PE

Inspection dates:	3 and 4 December 2024
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The principal of this school is Richard Rushton. This school is part of the Academy Transformation Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the interim chief executive officer (CEO), Derek Trimmer, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Patricia Beanland OBE. There is also an executive principal, Nicky Hood, who is responsible for this school and four others.

What is it like to attend this school?

Iceni Secondary Academy is a safe and calm place for learning. Pupils like being here. They benefit from strong relationships with caring and committed staff. Pupils get wide-ranging support for their well-being. They praise how the school has recently improved.

Pupils have experienced staffing disruption over time. Older pupils have suffered from low expectations of what they can achieve. They have learned a curriculum that has not been designed or delivered successfully. These issues are now better, but they have left pupils with gaps in their knowledge. This includes pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Behaviour is orderly and purposeful. Pupils are keen to learn. They conduct themselves well, such as in corridors or at breaktimes. Bullying is not typical. If pupils are worried about issues, they trust the school to resolve them.

Pupils engage well with the school's aspirations and values. They learn to 'aim high, work hard and be kind'. The coherent personal development programme helps pupils to build positive character traits. For example, pupils show respect in the way they interact with peers and adults. Pupils enjoy a range of opportunities, for instance in sport and drama. They also initiate new ones, such as the school magazine.

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

The trust recognises that after the previous inspection its actions to improve the school did not have the desired impact. It has now worked with the current leadership to rectify long-term weaknesses with urgency. Where leaders have most focused, such as resetting the culture of behaviour, this has been successful. They have been effective at developing better provision for pupils. The school knows where there is more to do.

The school has revised its curriculum. This is now broad and ambitious. In some areas, pupils do well. For example, in mathematics, they develop strong skills in reasoning and problem-solving. However, some pupils also have historical gaps in their knowledge. The school is not effective enough at assessing and addressing these. This means pupils often lack the prior knowledge needed to understand new content confidently. They do not achieve as well as they should.

Mostly, staff now teach the curriculum well. The trust and school provide high-quality training. This means teachers often explain and model learning effectively. Where this is the case, pupils remember and apply what they know. For example, in physical education (PE), pupils learn movement skills in football and use these adeptly in dance.

The school is supporting an increasing number of pupils with SEND. Some pupils with SEND have significant gaps in their learning. In most cases, these were caused by previously poor provision. The school identifies need accurately. Often, the school puts in place a range of well-considered support, such as regarding attendance. However,

sometimes learning is not tailored as closely as it should be to pupils' needs. Some pupils with SEND do not learn as well as they should.

Reading receives a high priority. The weakest readers get the help they need to access the curriculum.

The school has raised its expectations for behaviour. Staff apply these consistently. This has led to an increase in sanctions. That said, the school identifies and meets the needs that underlie any misbehaviour. Consequently, pupils behave well throughout the day.

Attendance is improving, from a low base. Some pupils have high absence. In these cases, the school does all it can to help them to attend better. This is an ongoing priority for the school.

The school prepares pupils well for life in a changing world. Pupils receive appropriate advice on future careers, such as a lot of information about apprenticeships. This enables them to make informed choices about their next steps. Pupils learn important content, for instance about democracy. They articulate their understanding maturely. Pupils show tolerant attitudes.

The trust and governors work closely with leaders to support staff well-being. Workload for staff has been high in the drive to improve provision. Yet staff buy into the need for this. However, the school has not communicated its aims to parents and carers as well as it could. As a result, some parents do not see or understand its actions to improve provision.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils with SEND do not get the precise support for learning that they need. This means they do not make the progress through the curriculum they should. The school should ensure it puts in place precise support to meet the individual learning needs of pupils with SEND, so that they achieve as well as they should.
- The school does not use assessment as effectively as it should to address gaps in pupils' learning from previous weak curriculums. This means in some areas pupils struggle to remember previous learning and do not build up the connected depth of knowledge they need to be successful. The school should ensure it identifies gaps in learning that pupils have from previous years and adapts the curriculum delivery successfully to rectify these.
- The school does not engage as well with parents as it could. As a result, some do not see the improvements that the school has made to provision. The school should review

the way it communicates and engages with parents, so that it works in closer partnership with them to continue the journey of improvement.

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	139058
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10318617
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	584
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Patricia Beanland OBE
CEO of the trust	Derek Trimmer
Principal	Richard Rushton
Website	icenisecondary.attrust.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	10 and 11 March 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- From 1 September 2024 the school admitted pupils aged 11 to 16 only. Prior to this, it was an all-through school. The primary phase has become a separate school.
- The principal was appointed in September 2023.
- The chair of governors was appointed in September 2024. The local governing body provides the trust with local oversight of this and another nearby secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEND has risen significantly since the previous inspection. It is well above the national average. This is especially the case for pupils who have an education, health and care plan.
- The school uses five unregistered alternative provisions for a small number of 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

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the interim CEO of the trust, other trust leaders, the principal, other senior leaders, staff, and pupils. As part of evaluating governance and the work of the trust, the lead inspector met the chair and vice chair of the trust, and with the chair of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, PE, geography and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, met with teachers, met with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 reviewed a wide range of documents, including curriculum plans, academy development plans, policies and documentation for behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and free-text comments submitted by parents during the inspection. They considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils. Inspectors spoke with a large number of pupils during the inspection.

Inspection team

Charlie Fordham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Clare Gammons

Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Celano

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024