

Charles Read Academy

Bourne Road, Corby Glen, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG33 4NT

Inspection dates

17–18 January 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Determined and effective leadership by the principal has brought about considerable improvements to the school since the previous inspection.
- The quality of leadership across the school is much improved. Subject leaders play a key role in checking the quality of teaching in their subject areas and in ensuring that pupils are achieving as well as they should.
- Effective action has been taken to eradicate the weakest teaching. Talented staff have been recruited. These changes, together with good-quality training provided for staff, have ensured that the quality of teaching is now good.
- Pupils' achievement has improved since the last inspection, especially in English, mathematics and science. Pupils made good progress in these subjects last year. Middle-attaining pupils did particularly well. Some pupils made excellent progress.
- Leaders are securing rapid improvements in the small minority of subjects where achievement has not been as strong.
- Parents' increased confidence in the school is reflected in the rising number of pupils on roll. All the available places in Year 7 have been filled for the last two years.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and often exemplary.
- The school's arrangements to safeguard pupils are strong. Pupils feel safe and know how to stay safe.
- Staff work very effectively to support pupils who join the school part-way through their secondary education and particularly the pupils who join the school in need of a fresh start.
- The quality of leadership is enhanced by a dedicated and effective governing body, which has grown in its effectiveness since the last inspection.
- The school has benefited very significantly from support from a sponsor trust. The trust has made a strong contribution to improving the school's facilities, strengthening its leadership and improving the quality of teaching.
- A smaller range of subjects is offered than in larger secondary schools but leaders ensure that the curriculum is well balanced. It is enhanced by excellent provision for enrichment.
- In the last two years, pupils' attendance has dipped. It is now improving but the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent remains higher than seen nationally.
- The school's provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. Recent changes to staffing mean that leaders do not currently have as clear an understanding as they should of how well these pupils are doing across the curriculum.
- Despite the improvements, teaching does not always challenge pupils to think deeply and achieve as well as they can.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that staff are equally skilled in providing work that challenges pupils to think deeply and attain more in all classes by:
 - ensuring that teachers provide more difficult work more quickly when pupils are ready to move on
 - ensuring that teachers' questioning is challenging enough and that pupils are given sufficient time to devise more sophisticated responses
 - maintaining the school's current focus on providing high levels of challenge for the most able pupils
 - checking that planned training in setting challenging tasks has been effective and then tailoring further training for staff who need additional help.
- Build on the effective work undertaken so far to improve the attendance of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, and further reduce persistent absenteeism.
- Quickly improve leaders' oversight of how well pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are achieving in each of their subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Strong leadership by the principal, with effective support from the increasingly skilled other members of the senior and extended leadership teams, has ensured that the school now provides a good quality of education.
- The school's reputation locally is growing and more parents are choosing to send their children to the school than before. Parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about most aspects of the school and the education it provides. Almost all judge their children to be happy at the school and that it is well led. Of the 40 parents that responded, 36 indicated that they would recommend the school to other parents.
- Effective leadership has ensured that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Leaders judge that the large majority of teaching is now good. Evidence gathered during the inspection, including through lesson observations, analysis of pupils' work and discussion with pupils, confirmed this view to be accurate.
- Leaders' views about the quality of teaching are accurate because they are gained from a wide range of evidence, including the regular visits they make to lessons, their rigorous scrutiny of pupils' work and through the moderation of assessments with other senior and middle leaders from across the trust.
- Leaders have created a culture where staff know they will be held to account but feel trusted and valued. The arrangements for the performance management of staff have proved to be effective in tackling previously weak teaching. The school's detailed portfolios of evidence about the quality of teaching do not currently link closely enough, however, with the performance management information presented to the governing body. This reduces governors' ability to have a strong oversight of arrangements.
- Good provision is made for teachers' professional development through a wide range of training opportunities, including opportunities to work with other subject specialists from across the trust. Staff are currently engaged in research projects intended to find ways of further boosting the reading ages of lower-attaining pupils, improving boys' literacy and raising attendance, for example.
- The quality of middle leadership has improved considerably since the previous inspection. The appointment of highly effective leaders in mathematics and science, for example, has resulted in better teaching, improved outcomes and much stronger capacity for continued improvement.
- The student progress leaders provide highly effective pastoral support to the most vulnerable pupils. They have worked increasingly effectively with parents to help promote pupils' welfare and achievement. Strategies to tackle low attendance are proving to be effective, though leaders know that attendance is still not high enough for all pupils.
- The school's arrangements to support disadvantaged pupils are effective. The leader responsible has identified the barriers to learning for each of these pupils and ensured that staff understand how best to overcome them. As a result of this and other

strategies, staff are acutely aware of their responsibility to promote the learning and well-being of these pupils. Leaders analyse the effectiveness of this funding and of the Year 7 catch-up funding to ensure that it makes the difference intended. Their analysis shows that the use of funding to raise the achievement of the most vulnerable Year 7 pupils is proving to be effective.

- Leaders have ensured that funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has been used effectively. They monitor the impact of specific strategies to support these pupils effectively. Their oversight of the impact of this funding on pupils' progress across the curriculum, however, has recently been diminished by changes to staffing arrangements. This means that governors are not able to check as easily that this group of pupils continues to achieve well.
- The curriculum covers all the required areas of learning, but the school's very small size means that a narrower range of subjects is offered than is usually seen in secondary schools. Leaders are creative in their work to enrich the academic curriculum. Weekly opportunities are provided for pupils to benefit from additional tuition, extra provision in sports and the arts or activities such as debating.
- Leaders ensure that time is allotted during the school day to these enrichment opportunities so that all pupils can benefit equally, including disadvantaged pupils and the many pupils who rely on school buses to get home. This typifies their commitment to securing equality of opportunity for all pupils. The strong enrichment programme also contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The curriculum ensures that pupils have a good understanding of fundamental British values. A well-planned programme of assemblies, supported by work in tutor periods and through other teaching, gives pupils a good understanding of the importance, for example, of the rule of law, tolerance towards others and freedom of speech.
- The school is supported well by the trust. The trust has provided essential financial support during the period when the number of pupils on roll fell. It makes a major contribution to the broad range of enrichment opportunities provided, which would otherwise not be available.
- The trust monitors the work of the school effectively, under the watchful leadership of the director of school improvement, who has a strong track record in improving schools. Trustees scrutinise the school's performance following each assessment point and moderate the school's self-evaluation of its work through visits by another headteacher from within the trust.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has grown in its effectiveness in holding school leaders to account since the last inspection. Training provided by the trust has strengthened governors' knowledge and understanding of their roles and the responsibilities of the governing body. This training has enhanced their skills in monitoring the school's effectiveness.
- Governors check how well the additional funding provided to the school for disadvantaged pupils has been spent, by closely scrutinising published performance information and the results of the school's internal assessments. They also scrutinise the achievement of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to satisfy themselves these pupils achieve well in their time at the school. However, their

analysis of these pupils' current progress is currently weakened by the school's lack of oversight of their current achievement across the curriculum.

- The chair of the governing body is a passionate advocate of the school and, through his appointment as a trustee, ensures that it gets the support needed from the trust.
- Governors closely monitor the effectiveness of the school's work to increase attendance and reduce persistent absenteeism.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's policies and procedures fully reflect current requirements. All the necessary checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are carried out. Staff receive regular training in safeguarding, including safeguarding children from the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.
- The school's arrangements to support the most vulnerable pupils are strong. Leaders are quick to involve external agencies where they have particular concerns about a child's welfare. Records show that they follow up referrals to social services promptly if their concerns escalate. They are acutely aware of the need to reduce persistent absenteeism further to ensure that all pupils are kept safe by attending school regularly.
- Leaders are committed to ensuring that all groups of pupils are protected from harm. For example, they attended training provided by Stonewall to ensure that the school's strategies to support lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender pupils were strong enough.
- Leaders tackle the rare incidents of bullying effectively, and provide support plans for any pupils who experience repeated incidents of bullying. All of the pupils who met with inspectors expressed complete confidence in their teachers' commitment to keeping them safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment benefits significantly from the very strong relationships between pupils and staff seen in almost all lessons.
- The school's small size and the relatively small class sizes mean that class teachers know their pupils extremely well. They have a very strong understanding of how well pupils are doing in lessons and over time.
- Teachers make excellent use of ongoing assessment in lessons to monitor how well pupils are learning. They intervene quickly if pupils need additional help or explanation, with the result that pupils who find work difficult usually get to grips quickly with the task set. Teachers are particularly alert to the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. They are vigilant in ensuring that these pupils are learning effectively.
- High expectations from the school's leaders mean that teachers manage pupils' learning extremely effectively. Pupils' books are most often very well presented; this

includes the books of most of the pupils who find aspects of literacy difficult. Pupils' books reflect their pride in their work and the good or strongly improving progress they are making across the curriculum. Virtually all students endeavour to complete all of the work they are set and are achieving well.

- Teachers' accurate use of assessment means that pupils have a good understanding of how to improve their work, and pupils routinely do so. They demonstrate resilience and motivation in rectifying mistakes. Teachers usually ensure that pupils correct basic spelling and punctuation errors.
- Teachers are skilled in ensuring that all pupils participate in the learning. Teachers target questions at different pupils in their classes rather than relying on volunteers. This ensures that pupils are kept on their toes. In all of the lessons observed, the pupils were able to respond to their teachers' questions in a timely way because they were all paying attention.
- Pupils who join the school in Year 7 with lower-than-expected reading ages benefit from specialist teaching in literacy, including by a primary-school-trained teacher. They receive good support through a nurture group that helps them build the essential skills they need to gain access to the wider curriculum.
- Teachers are skilled in supporting pupils' learning very well but leaders know that work is not always challenging enough, including for the most able pupils. Teachers often leave the most challenging tasks until the end of the lesson, which results in too few pupils getting on to them or pupils not having enough time to complete them meaningfully.
- Teachers use questioning to involve the whole class, but their questions sometimes demand only superficial answers. Questioning was most effective in raising attainment in art and mathematics, when pupils were given time to consider and discuss the challenging questions posed before feeding back to the class. This resulted in more sophisticated responses than seen in some other lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are respectful towards each other and to their teachers. During the inspection, pupils were invariably polite when they spoke with inspectors. They wear their uniform neatly, reflecting the pride they have in their school.
- Pupils consistently told inspectors that they appreciate the school's small size, because it means they get to know all of the teachers and pupils in the school. Pupils said this helps them to feel safe. They are well informed about potential risks to their safety, including through the abuse of social media and the internet.
- Pupils report that there is very little bullying in the school and that, if it ever does occur, it is dealt with very effectively. Inspectors' scrutiny of the school's bullying logs shows that they are right to feel confident about this aspect of the school's work. A number of parents commented on the quality of the school's work in supporting pupils who were experiencing difficulties such as anxiety.

- The pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who spoke to inspectors were all extremely supportive of the school's work to promote their well-being and learning.
- The school is highly inclusive and particularly effective in supporting pupils who join the school part-way through their secondary education. In formal and informal discussions, these pupils reported unanimously how happy they were to have joined Charles Read Academy. They said they were quickly made to feel welcome by staff and pupils.
- Pupils have a good understanding of cultures and ways of life different to their own. They are tolerant of individual and cultural differences and, in discussions with inspectors, spoke openly about their acceptance of pupils who are different from themselves, including any lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender pupils.
- Pupils are well served by a strong programme of careers education. Pupils in Year 7 have already learned about apprenticeships and routes into higher education through talks from external speakers arranged by the school. Older pupils benefit from an excellent range of information and advice from employers who visit the school, as well as from one-to-one careers advice and support.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behaviour was mostly impeccable during the inspection. Older pupils told inspectors that behaviour is now much better than they have ever previously experienced at the school. School leaders know, however, that a small minority of pupils do not always maintain the high standards of behaviour expected.
- In recent years, the school has accepted many pupils into the school, particularly in Years 10 and 11, who have struggled to settle well or to conduct themselves properly in their previous schools. Leaders have responded to this challenge well, with the result that the overwhelming majority of these pupils have learned to modify their behaviour in line with the school's high expectations. While fixed-term exclusions remain a little higher than are usually seen, almost all are a result of the school imposing its high expectations on pupils who have newly arrived. The extremely low incidence of repeat exclusions reflects well on the effectiveness of the school's approach.
- Since the last inspection, pupils' attendance has dipped and last year it was below the national average. As a result, leaders have taken more concerted and effective action this year to tackle poor attendance, for example, by raising the bar with pupils and parents about the levels of attendance expected, rewarding pupils for good attendance, conducting more home visits and, when necessary, issuing fines. These approaches have helped improve attendance overall to be just below the national average, though it remains slightly lower than this for disadvantaged pupils.
- The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school has reduced this year but it remains too high.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' progress in their best eight subjects by the end of Year 11 has been in line with the national average in the last two years, having previously been very significantly below average.
- Published information shows that the longer the pupils have been at the school, the better they have achieved in their examinations at the end of key stage 4.
- As a result of the good progress they make, pupils' attainment in their best eight subjects combined at the end of Year 11 was close to the national average last year, despite their significantly lower-than-average starting points.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education or training. Last year, all pupils in Year 11 secured places in post-16 education or training, including training through apprenticeships and A level study.
- At the last inspection, inspectors identified that pupils did not make good progress in mathematics. This is no longer the case.
- Excellent leadership in mathematics and much stronger teaching resulted in higher proportions of pupils attaining a grade A* to C in mathematics than seen nationally in 2016, representing a very significant improvement on previous results. Lower and middle attainers made particularly strong progress in mathematics.
- Pupils' achievement in English dipped in 2016, having been exceptional in 2015. Results in 2016, however, reflect pupils' good progress from their lower starting points in English. The most able pupils made excellent progress in English.
- Progress in science was exceptionally strong for middle-ability pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- School leaders recognise that too few of the small number of most-able pupils attained the highest grades in mathematics and science. An excellent range of strategies is in place to remedy this and the small proportion of high-attaining pupils in Year 11 are on track to secure the grades of which they are capable.
- Effective action has been taken to improve the quality of teaching and leadership in subjects that have performed less well, notably history, physical education and food technology. Inspectors saw strong evidence of improvements in the quality of pupils' work over time in these subjects. Teachers are working hard and effectively to tackle previous gaps in pupils' learning as a result of the weaker teaching and assessment they have received in the past. Nevertheless, pupils' attainment in these subjects remains lower than in other subjects in the school, particularly in key stage 4.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieved in line with other pupils last year, with middle-ability disadvantaged pupils achieving particularly well in their best eight subjects combined. There were too few low- or high-attaining disadvantaged pupils to comment on their achievement without identifying the pupils, but gaps between the achievements of disadvantaged pupils overall and those of other pupils nationally are diminishing.
- The school's current data shows that disadvantaged pupils' progress varies slightly from year to year when compared to their peers, being stronger in some subjects in some years, and weaker in others. The pupil premium champion ensures that a careful watch is maintained over these pupils' progress so that action can be taken where

progress stalls.

- Pupils in Year 7 who need additional support to improve their reading make strong progress in accelerating their progress in reading as a result of the bespoke lessons in phonics that they receive.
- The large majority of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because teachers are highly responsive to their needs. Recent changes to the staffing arrangements for these pupils mean that leaders do not currently have a strong enough overview of how well current pupils are doing across the curriculum. Nevertheless, recent examination results, observations of teaching and the work seen in pupils' books during the inspection confirmed that these pupils are achieving well.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 136479 |
| Local authority | Lincolnshire |
| Inspection number | 10020975 |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Academy sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 215 |
| Appropriate authority | Academy trust |
| Chair | Alan Hancock |
| Principal | Robert Sloan |
| Telephone number | 01476 550 333 |
| Website | www.charlesreadacademy.co.uk |
| Email address | enquiries@charlesreadacademy.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 4 February 2015 |

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the curriculum on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about the curriculum on its website. Information is not provided about the curriculum content in each subject for each year group.
- Charles Read Academy is a very small secondary school. It is sponsored by the David Ross Education Trust.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who join the school other than at the start of the school year is much higher than average. Around one quarter of pupils currently at the school began their secondary education elsewhere.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is

higher than average, though it has reduced since the previous inspection.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is higher than average at 41% and has risen since the last inspection.
- The school does not use any alternative providers of education.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 20 lessons taught by 16 different teachers. Around one half of these observations were made jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors scrutinised the work in pupils' books during these observations.
- Inspectors held formal meetings with different groups of pupils and spoke to pupils informally in lessons and during lunchtimes. They listened to a small selection of pupils read.
- Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, other teachers, including newly qualified teachers, representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and representatives of the David Ross Education Trust.
- Inspectors took account of the 40 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the 14 responses from parents made through the Ofsted free text service. They considered the responses of the five members of staff who completed the online questionnaire. They also scrutinised the school's own surveys of parents' views.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including published performance information and the school's own records of pupils' attainment and progress. They considered the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance. They also scrutinised the school's records of checks made on the quality of teaching, department action plans and records of training for staff. They considered the minutes of meetings of the governing body, as well as documents provided by the sponsor about the impact of its work with the school. Inspectors scrutinised the school's policies and procedures for keeping pupils safe.

Inspection team

Daniel Burton, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Paul Sweeney

Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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