

Inspection of Ralph Sadleir School

Station Road, Puckeridge, Ware, Hertfordshire SG11 1TF

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 April 2024

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Kerry Scripps. This school is part of Ralph Sadleir Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Kerry Scripps, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Julia Tye.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' experiences at Ralph Sadleir over the past two years have been affected by significant changes in leadership and staff absence. Expectations of pupils have not been commonly understood by staff or pupils. This has meant that there has been inconsistency in the quality of education.

Pupils are now beginning to learn and understand; what is expected of them, how they should behave, and the importance of being respectful. This results from recent changes in leadership that have brought about a greater degree of consistency across the school. While too many pupils still do not meet expectations, things are improving. A focus on the school's new motto 'students of today, citizens of tomorrow' encapsulates these changes.

Most pupils are happy and attend school regularly. They are keen to point out that they feel safe in school and that bullying is rare. Pupils trust adults to act when they raise a concern. Pupils understand the system for reporting worries.

A range of extra-curricular activities are available to pupils, including sporting activities. Pupils can work towards the Ralph Sadleir award. This encourages pupil participation across a range of activities, including public speaking.

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

The quality of education in some subjects is not yet good because the curriculum is not delivered consistently or sufficiently well. As a result, the quality of work produced by pupils is variable. Pupils' work is not assessed effectively. Misconceptions and errors in their work are not addressed. Pupils do not respond to the feedback they receive. In a small number of subjects where pupils' knowledge is checked regularly and precisely, pupils achieve more highly. While informal guidance on curriculum is available for staff, too many teachers have not had specific professional development in this area. Leaders recognise this as a priority.

The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is effective. Pupils with SEND make progress that is in line with their peers. There are clear adaptations made for pupils to enable them to access their learning. Adults supporting pupils with SEND in-class receive regular training. As a result, support for pupils is appropriate and focused.

There is a systematic and rapid approach to identifying those pupils who struggle to read. The programme to support pupils is comprehensive. This starts with phonics in Year 5 and progresses through to ensure that pupils can read fluently the books that interest them. Pupils are confident to read in class.

Too many pupils do not behave appropriately in class and during unstructured times. Too often, low-level disruption is ignored by staff. This leads to learning being disrupted. Expectations of pupils are not consistently high, and the behaviour policy

is not always applied rigorously. Pupils are not always polite or respectful to others in the school community. The view of most pupils and staff is that behaviour is improving quickly. The number of pupils being suspended is falling significantly. Pupils attend school regularly and are typically on time for lessons.

The programme for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is delivered through lessons, house group time and assemblies. The school also makes use of external visitors, such as the police, to bring the PSHE programme to life. Pupils do not always value the programme or see its relevance to them. However, the school ensures that pupils can engage with different cultures through visits, such as a Year 8 visit to France.

Turbulence in senior leadership and governance has had a wide-ranging impact on the pupils and school more widely. New leadership has brought about stability and increasing consistency. Leaders now have clear strategic plans for improvement. While these plans are at an early stage, there is already some evidence of impact on pupil behaviour. Governors have a clear understanding of what is required to bring about change. There is still much work to do. External advice is being accessed to support further improvement. Typically, staff are proud to work at the school and can see evidence of change.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The behaviour of some pupils is not yet appropriate. Pupils are not always respectful to one another or staff. This is because the behaviour policy is not applied consistently by all staff, nor are their expectations high enough. As a result, learning is disrupted in some lessons. The school must ensure that the behaviour policy is implemented rigorously across the school to enable all pupils to achieve well.
- The delivery of subject content in some subjects is not always ambitious. As a result, there is inconsistency in the quality of work produced by pupils in lessons, and a limited depth of learning. The school should ensure that all staff are robust in their approach to planning and sequencing lessons to ensure that pupils build their knowledge successfully over time.
- Assessment in some subjects is not effective. This is because the feedback on pupils' work is limited in scope and few, if any, checks are made on whether pupils have acted on such feedback. As a result, pupils do not know how well they are achieving or how to improve. The school must ensure that robust structures are in place to provide pupils with the guidance they need to address gaps in knowledge.

- Staff have not received sufficient training to enable them to deliver the curriculum effectively. As a result, pupils do not always receive a consistent depth and quality of education. The school must implement rigorously an approach to professional development that enables staff to have consistently effective skills in adapting their teaching to meet the needs of all pupils.

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	140249
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10288527
Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	348
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Julia Tye
Headteacher	Kerry Scripps
Website	ralphsadleir.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	18 and 19 October 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The current headteacher has been in post since November 2023.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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.
- The inspectors met with the school's senior leaders, governors and a representative (via telephone) from the local authority.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, science and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum,

visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- 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.
- The inspection team considered the views of parents and carers through responses to Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors gathered the views of pupils and staff through Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys, as well as interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Jonathan Rockey, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sally Nutman	Ofsted Inspector
Wayne Jarvis	Ofsted Inspector

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