

Ipswich Academy

Braziers Wood Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP3 0SP

Inspection dates

5–6 March 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
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

- The dynamic leadership of the principal and senior leaders, well supported by the trust, has ensured that Ipswich Academy now provides a good education for its pupils.
- The most striking improvement since the last inspection has been in pupils' standards of behaviour. Pupils behave well when moving around the site and in lessons. Pupils, parents, carers and teachers agree that behaviour is now much better at school.
- The school is a warm and welcoming centre of learning. Staff take wide-ranging and effective actions to promote pupils' physical and emotional health.
- There is a well-organised, thorough approach to safeguarding pupils across the school. Pupils feel safe and they trust staff to take care of them. Pupils are alert to contemporary risks because of the guidance they receive.
- Teachers plan their lessons with great care and convey their strong subject knowledge enthusiastically. They use simple assessment systems to help pupils improve their work and deepen their learning.
- The high-quality curriculum prepares pupils well for the next stages in their lives. Pupils also enjoy the opportunities they have to develop their personal and social skills through the wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Pupils make good progress in all year groups. This is especially the case in English, mathematics and increasingly in science. Leaders track pupils' progress carefully and act swiftly to address any underperformance.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils has improved significantly as a result of good teaching and the effective deployment of additional resources.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive effective personalised support and most are making improved progress. Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well.
- Pupils make slower progress in humanities, computing, art and food subjects.
- Although attainment remains low, it is improving.
- Rates of attendance are increasing strongly and are in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is falling rapidly but is still too high.
- The use of fixed-term exclusion has decreased significantly as behaviour has improved. Leaders accept, however, that the behaviour of a small minority of pupils is not good enough.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further enhance the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with SEND, attain well and make good progress.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - reducing the use of fixed-term exclusions
 - further reducing rates of persistent absence.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Outstanding leadership at all levels has transformed the culture of the school. The principal is determined that all pupils should strive and excel. She has set out a clear, ambitious vision to improve the life chances of pupils in the school and the local community. She has galvanised other leaders and teachers in achieving this. Consequently, the school's reputation has soared and applications to join Year 7 in September exceed available places.
- Leaders identify the school's strengths accurately and know which aspects of the school need to improve most urgently. Their improvement plans are admirably clear and simple, but they are considered and implemented meticulously. They reflect leaders' priorities for improving the quality of teaching, behaviour and attendance. Leaders and the trust are rigorous in monitoring the impact of these plans.
- All leaders are very clear about their roles and responsibilities. They believe they have the support they need to match what is expected of them. They follow the lead set by the principal in ensuring that every decision they make is based on what is best for the pupils of Ipswich Academy.
- Leaders provide teachers with accurate feedback on the effectiveness of their work. All teachers are helped to improve, and professional development is at the heart of the school's improvement. In addition to training to enhance their understanding of their subjects, examination requirements and teaching skills, teachers are encouraged to undertake training to develop as leaders. Leaders have also planned successfully to address staffing and recruitment difficulties in some subjects.
- Teachers understand how their role is critical to school improvement and say that they are now enabled to flourish. The principal has successfully stripped away tasks that were not productive, allowing teachers to concentrate on planning, teaching, assessing and reflecting on their work.
- Leaders at all levels and teachers have a very open approach to learning from other professionals, including experts from beyond the trust. Staff have used the guidance intelligently, and this has contributed to the school's rapid improvement. In return, leaders are frequently asked to support other schools. The local authority, for example, appreciates the lead the school has taken in working with local primary schools.
- The principal and her team of senior leaders have worked successfully to develop the skills and impact of middle leaders. These middle leaders are now dynamic ambassadors of Ipswich Academy, who are proud to work at the school. Their shared commitment to achieving the best for the school's pupils has played a major role in the school's improvement since the last inspection.
- Newly qualified and trainee teachers feel well supported. School leaders provide them with expert training and mentoring to help them develop their teaching skills.
- Leaders are rightly proud of the school's varied and motivating curriculum. They regularly review and adapt the curriculum to ensure that subject choices are right for pupils at Ipswich Academy. They have responded to pupils' and parents' views by, for example, increasing opportunities to study music and drama. The school has also

played a central role across the trust in establishing a coherent curriculum from key stage 1 to key stage 4.

- Leaders are building strong and effective partnerships with the community. The school constantly strives to improve communications with parents and to involve them in their children's education. Initiatives such as 'fish and chip' evenings, when leaders combine information-sharing and social activities, are popular. The school recognises that this is an ongoing and long-term development.
- The school makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A rich array of extra-curricular activities take place before and after school, and during lunch and breaktimes. These activities include a book club, sport, music, drama and rollerblading clubs. The extensive programme of trips helps to enhance pupils' understanding of modern life and broaden their cultural horizons. The school pays for all pupils in Year 7 to go on a residential visit.
- Leaders have forged productive links with primary schools so that pupils' transition to secondary school is smooth. Pupils and parents feel well informed about what is to be expected, so pupils feel prepared and confident as they quickly settle into the new routines.
- Leaders maintain close contact with the alternative provision organised for a few pupils. Positive and regular communications demonstrate that school staff are committed to providing pupils with the best arrangements to improve their behaviour and progress.
- Leaders' procedures for documenting the movement of pupils and their destinations when they leave the school are well organised and thorough.
- The school receives additional funding to enhance provision for a variety of groups of pupils. These include pupils with SEND, disadvantaged pupils and those Year 7 pupils who need to catch up. In all cases, leaders manage these funds effectively so that they are making significant contributions to improving the learning, personal development and well-being of these pupils.

Governance of the school

- Trustees have a detailed knowledge of the school and a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They share leaders' high aspirations and ambition.
- Trustees plan strategically for the school's future and demonstrate strong moral purpose in their commitment to the school and the community it serves. Their clear vision for continued improvement embraces all schools in the trust and focuses on improving pupils' life chances.
- The trust provides school leaders with a skilful balance of challenge and support. This has contributed greatly to the rapid improvement in school outcomes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding has a very high profile, and pupils' welfare and safety are paramount. Staff, pupils and parents agree that the strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school allows pupils to feel safe.

- All safeguarding arrangements are robust and rigorous. Staff are appropriately trained; they register concerns quickly and handle them promptly. Case files are detailed and record information accurately. Staff work tenaciously with external agencies to ensure that concerns and referrals are followed up appropriately.
- Staff take every opportunity to promote safety through teaching pupils how to identify and deal with potential dangers. This includes the use of social media, when pupils are out and about in their communities and when at home.
- The trust rigorously monitors the school's safeguarding processes to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The school's vision for teaching and learning is that teachers should 'teach the right things efficiently'. This simple aim has contributed to improved teaching since the last inspection and it is now good.
- In all year groups and in most subjects, effective teaching supports pupils' good progress. Teachers use an agreed framework when planning and teaching lessons, which helps to create a calm and orderly learning environment. Pupils say that this familiar and systematic routine enables them to learn successfully.
- Teachers make consistently good use of the agreed strategy, 'circulate, check and react', to address pupils' misconceptions. As a result, pupils learn swiftly from their mistakes and teachers can assess accurately how well pupils are achieving in lessons.
- Most teachers ensure that pupils focus on their learning from the start of the lesson with 'do now' tasks. These activities help pupils recall what they have learned in previous lessons. Occasionally, the purpose of these tasks is not clear enough to pupils.
- Teachers use a range of well-considered questioning strategies to help pupils develop their knowledge and understanding swiftly.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is a strength. This is notably the case in science, where it has contributed to a marked improvement in pupils' achievement. Where teachers teach subjects outside their specialism, they receive specialist training to deepen their knowledge of the subject.
- Leaders have developed rigorous systems to monitor the quality of teaching across the curriculum and provide effective support and targeted training when required. Every week, for example, they scrutinise all the books belonging to pupils in a selected year group. As a result, the standard of presentation of pupils' work is high.
- Teachers underpin their high expectations of pupils by creating positive working relationships with them. This is reflected in pupils' positive attitudes to homework, which teachers set regularly, with extended tasks set over the holidays.
- All teachers understand their responsibility for improving the low literacy and numeracy standards that pupils tend to have when they start in this school. Teachers collaborate regularly with colleagues from different subject areas to help pupils improve their basic skills. This has a positive impact on pupils' progress.
- Teachers are well informed about the needs of pupils with SEND and plan appropriately to support their learning. Additional adults provide effective support for the pupils that

they work with, and as a result these pupils progress well from their different starting points.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school takes this work very seriously. Staff provide an extensive range of opportunities for all pupils to grow spiritually, socially, morally and culturally. Pupils can develop their skills as student leaders, community leaders or anti-bullying ambassadors, for example. As a result, younger pupils see strong role models in their older peers.
- Ipswich Academy rightly prides itself on its inclusive ethos. As the school's reputation improves, an increasing number of pupils are joining the school at different points in the year. Pupils act as buddies to these new arrivals, many of whom speak English as an additional language, and ensure that they are made to feel welcome.
- The school does not shy away from addressing the complex issues that confront young people. In particular, it has spearheaded attempts to address the tragic consequences of local gang and knife crime. Pupils described some of the issues that they discuss within the school's personal, social and health education programme as 'hard-hitting'. These issues include sexual identity and social justice, and pupils told inspectors that the school is a place where it is safe to be different.
- Pupils who have struggled with a normal school timetable attend the 'support centre'. This is a place where they can find calm under thoughtful supervision. They receive the support necessary to re-integrate into mainstream lessons wherever possible.
- Leaders have established a clear system for the setting of teaching groups. In a small number of classes, this does not always lead to positive relationships between pupils and their teachers.
- Leaders carry out appropriate checks on the welfare and progress of the small number of pupils who attend alternative provision. This includes daily checks on pupils' attendance and regular monitoring of the progress that they are making. These pupils benefit from this specialised support.
- Leaders provide pupils with clear guidance to support their options at the end of key stage 3. Pupils value the high-quality careers education that enables them to make well-informed decisions about post-16 education and training.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders are clear that the management of pupils' behaviour starts with positive relationships, and they model this routinely in their interaction with pupils. As a result, the school is a calm and orderly environment. Pupils are polite and courteous and socialise sensibly at lunchtime and breaktime.

- The school introduced a revised behaviour policy in 2018. This was partly in response to pupils' concerns that disruptive behaviour was not always being managed well. Pupils say that behaviour has improved as a result of this and that they are able to learn more effectively.
- A small minority of pupils disrupt learning in some lessons. Leaders have effective plans to address this as well as the above-average number of fixed-term exclusions.
- Leaders monitor pupils' attendance rigorously and have successfully remedied the past culture of low attendance. No group of pupils is now disadvantaged by poor attendance and the overall rate of attendance has risen significantly to be in line with the national average. Pupils arrive at their lessons punctually.
- The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has also decreased, but leaders recognise that it is still too high.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Outcomes have improved since the last inspection and are now good. On entry to the school, pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics are significantly below average. As the quality of teaching has improved, so has the progress made by pupils.
- In 2018, Year 11 pupils' progress overall was average. In English and mathematics, however, it was above average, while in science and French it was well above average. The most able and lower-ability pupils made strong progress. Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieved well. A group of middle-ability pupils, however, did not achieve as well as their peers. Leaders identified exam anxiety as a cause of this and they now hold regular review meetings with Year 11 pupils to address this.
- The school sets challenging, achievable targets for pupils in all their subjects. In the light of this, inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and examined the school's own recent assessment information to investigate the progress pupils are making. This scrutiny confirmed that most pupils in all year groups are making good progress in most subjects. Where pupils' progress is slower, in humanities, art, computing and food subjects, leaders have clear plans to address this.
- Pupils in Year 11 make good use of their dedicated study zone, which is stocked with a range of learning resources, including tests, quizzes and revision guides. In Year 10 and Year 11, pupils make good progress in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics. At key stage 3, most pupils' progress meets or exceeds the challenging targets they have been set.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making improved progress as a result of carefully planned interventions. Across key stage 4, the difference between their progress and attainment and their peers' is diminishing. Although disadvantaged pupils make slower progress than other pupils in Year 7 and Year 8, they catch up by Year 9. Leaders recognise that the attainment and progress of this group of pupils are areas for further improvement.
- Leaders are knowledgeable about the needs of individual pupils with SEND. They identify the support pupils need and they communicate this to subject specialists. As a result, these pupils receive effective support to meet their targets and most make progress which is in line with that of other pupils. This is particularly the case in English, although progress is slower in other subjects.

- Pupils are well informed about the opportunities that exist for them beyond school and how to achieve their ambitions. Last year, nearly every pupil secured a place in further education, training or employment. Compared to previous years, a greater proportion of Year 11 pupils have applied for academic post-16 courses this year.
- The small number of pupils that attend alternative provision make effective progress.
- Pupils' reading skills are typically low when they join the school in Year 7. Leaders plan effective additional support to ensure that pupils improve these skills rapidly.

School details

Unique reference number	136453
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10058677

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

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	793
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	David Willis
Principal	Mrs Helen Winn
Telephone number	01473 550040
Website	http://ipswichacademy.paradigmtrust.org
Email address	helen.winn@paradigmtrust.org
Date of previous inspection	18–19 October 2016

Information about this school

- The principal has been in post since July 2017.
- The school is part of the Paradigm Trust, which is a multi-academy trust with 10 trustees. The principal of Ipswich Academy reports directly to the chief executive officer of the trust.
- The academy is part of the Ipswich Opportunity Area. This is a network of local partners working together to increase social mobility in Ipswich.
- The school makes use of the following alternative education providers: Parkside Academy, Lindbergh Campus, Suffolk New College, Inspire Suffolk, EDLounge.
- The school is smaller than the average secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the principal and other leaders and teachers across the school. They met with trustees and the chief executive officer of the Paradigm Trust, as well as speaking with the chair of trustees and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors visited parts of 47 lessons, sometimes accompanied by leaders, and reviewed the work of pupils in their books. They visited an assembly. Inspectors met with two groups of pupils. They also talked to and observed pupils during their social times.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including leaders' evaluation of the school and improvement plans. They looked at the school's safeguarding records, information on pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour and checks on the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors considered the 143 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the 17 responses to the free-text option and the 56 responses to Ofsted's survey of the views of staff. Inspectors spoke with pupils during their free time and in arranged meetings and reviewed the 50 responses to Ofsted's survey of pupils' views.

Inspection team

Peter Whear, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Kathryn Herlock	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Sutton	Ofsted Inspector
Lesley Daniel	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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