

Civitas Academy

90a Great Knollys Street, Reading, Berkshire RG1 7HL

Inspection dates

18–19 September 2018

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
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since opening this brand new school in 2015, leaders have worked hard to recruit and galvanise a strong and capable team of teachers and support staff. This school provides a good quality of education for its pupils.
- Teachers use their secure subject knowledge and well-judged assessment techniques to set work at just the right level for pupils. Aply supported by the dedicated team of teaching assistants, they quickly adapt tasks if they are too easy or hard.
- Pupils behave well and show pride in their school. Their commitment to the 'Civitas Certainties' helps them to develop positive attributes which will serve them well in the future.
- Governors know the school well and visit often to check that the work of leaders is effective. They are well supported by the Reach2 multi-academy trust, which provides useful, external validation of the school's effectiveness and helps to hold leaders to account for their actions.
- The early years is a calm and purposeful area. Staff know the children well and help them to develop the skills they need to succeed in Year 1.
- Pupils make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Nevertheless, standards of writing in the foundation subjects and science do not always match the high standard seen in English lessons.
- In most lessons, pupils start their tasks quickly and are highly productive. In a small minority of lessons, pupils become distracted and do not make the progress they are capable of.
- Staff receive strong support to help them improve their teaching and are encouraged to develop their professional expertise. Now the school is of sufficient size, it needs to provide further training to develop the capacity and skills of middle leaders.
- Leaders have worked hard to improve the attendance of pupils. Nevertheless, some families do not ensure that their children regularly attend school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve systems to train and develop middle leaders so that they can drive further development across the school.
- Ensure that the quality of writing in science and the foundation subjects matches the high standards in English lessons.
- Increase the attendance of the small proportion of pupils who remain persistently absent.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The executive headteacher and head of school have recruited and trained a skilled and talented team of leaders. Supported ably by her leadership team, the executive headteacher has ensured that the school has grown in both size and strength. The school is well placed to improve further.
- Leaders use a range of systems to monitor and check the quality of teaching across the school carefully. Staff are provided with incisive feedback and support to improve their practice and value the opportunities to work with others to gain from their experience. As a result of this well-targeted training, staff, including those who have recently joined the school, have quickly developed their skills and understanding.
- Due to the rapidly increasing size of the school, middle leadership is not yet fully developed. Leaders have clear plans to improve this but at the time of the inspection it was too early to evaluate the impact of this work.
- Leaders' incisive use of assessment systems helps them to track how well groups of pupils are performing. This, combined with detailed information on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, helps leaders to identify issues when they arise and react quickly to iron out the few remaining weaknesses.
- Pupils are offered extensive opportunities to join the free extra-curricular clubs and appreciate the chance to pursue their interests. The curriculum is embellished through a range of trips, experiences and guest speakers. For example, pupils in Year 1 studied dinosaurs and spoke enthusiastically about the visit from palaeontologists to help them learn more about their topic. The curriculum is lively and interesting, allowing pupils to improve their skills and understanding in a range of subjects. Nevertheless, standards of writing in the foundation subjects and science are not as high as those in English.
- Pupil premium funding is used wisely to help pupils get the best possible start to their primary education. The needs of each pupil are carefully considered, and plans are monitored closely and evaluated for effectiveness. This helps disadvantaged pupils to make a strong start in their education and to keep up with other pupils in the school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are quickly identified and supported well. Leaders work with external agencies and parents to identify pupils' needs and create bespoke plans to remove their barriers to learning. These pupils make strong progress.

Governance of the school

- Governors are knowledgeable and ambitious for the pupils of the school. They visit the school often to conduct focused reviews of the school's performance. For example, governors monitored the use of sports premium funding, noting rightly that pupils now have far greater access to extra-curricular sports activities than they did previously.
- Governors work to ensure that the school meets the requirements of those with protected characteristics. For example, they ensure that the curriculum allows pupils to learn and celebrate a range of faiths and that pupils achieve equally well, regardless of

gender or disability. However, governors' work in this area is not always sharply focused as plans for tracking the school's equalities objectives are not fully in place.

- The multi-academy trust has a clear and accurate understanding of the school and provides the right level of support for leaders and staff. Officers have provided significant support for building and administrative systems which have allowed leaders to focus on the quality of teaching. The multi-academy trust offers useful external reviews of the school's performance which help the governing body and leaders gain an objective view of the school and what it requires to improve further.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Statutory checks are made on all staff before they commence employment and comprehensive training is provided to all staff to help them to identify and report the early signs of abuse. When concerns do arise, staff notice and alert leaders straight away. Leaders waste no time in getting the families the help they need, working with external agencies as appropriate.
- Parents are taught to keep their children safe. They receive regular updates in the school newsletter about keeping their children safe on the internet, particularly regarding the time pupils spend online, so that they develop healthy attitudes towards technology.
- Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe and understand that they need to seek help from adults when they need it. For example, pupils know that they should never speak to strangers in person or on the internet and should tell parents or teachers if this happens.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers possess strong subject knowledge and set work at the right level for pupils. They question pupils well during lessons and use this to adapt their plans when required. As a result, pupils receive the right amount of challenge and support when they need it.
- Teaching assistants are used well in class to help pupils to organise their work, stay focused and access their tasks. Teaching assistants feel confident to try new things and work closely with teachers to develop plans and assess pupils' understanding. Consequently, pupils, particularly those who have SEN and/or disabilities, make strong progress.
- Teachers support pupils to develop their calculation skills in mathematics. Pupils use written methods and mental calculations to solve increasingly complex problems. As a result, pupils make strong progress in mathematics.
- Pupils are taught how to write well in a range of contexts. For example, pupils applied their knowledge of conjunctions and time conjunctions to write a story which mimicked 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory'. This helped pupils to write using sentences of varying complexity, producing lively and interesting texts. In the foundation subjects and science lessons pupils write regularly to convey their thinking and ideas.

Nevertheless, standards of writing in these lessons are not as high as those in English lessons.

- Teachers provide pupils with incisive feedback to help them take the next steps in their learning. Teachers' probing questions stretch pupils' understanding further or test their thinking. As a result, pupils are given the right level of challenge in lessons.
- Pupils are taught to read well and encouraged to do so often. Pupils who fall behind are offered useful support to catch up and receive additional opportunities to read to adults in school. This helps these pupils catch up quickly.
- Assessment information is used rigorously to identify any pupils who fall behind. When this occurs, pupils are given additional help to catch up. These interventions are bespoke and effective in ensuring that pupils, particularly boys and those who join part way through the year, achieve their potential.
- Teachers typically have high expectations of pupils in class. They ensure that pupils know what is expected and communicate tasks in clear, simple steps. Most lessons are characterised by a calm and orderly atmosphere. However, when expectations are not as high, pupils' focus dips and they are slower to start their tasks.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' understanding of British values is promoted well. The 'Civitas Certainties' are used to develop pupils' understanding of responsibility and help pupils to aspire to achieve their best. For example, pupils raised money for the local homeless shelter. Pupils are well prepared to be successful global citizens.
- The school makes a promise that all pupils will experience 11 exciting and inspirational things before the age of 11. For example, all pupils get the opportunity to visit the theatre, a farm and a planetarium. This is linked closely to the curriculum and helps pupils to broaden their understanding of what they can achieve and enjoy in the local area and wider region.
- Pupils are typically well presented, proud of their school and look after their environment. They appreciate their brand-new building and want to keep it that way. As a result, shared areas are tidy, and the site is devoid of litter.
- Pupils play well at breaktimes and enjoy the opportunity to chat, play ball games and run around. Pupils are well supervised and report that they are well looked after if they hurt themselves. Pupils feel that they all have an adult to talk to should they need to, and are confident that staff will help them if they need it.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- All staff receive comprehensive behaviour management training to help maintain positive behaviour in and out of the classroom. Pupils are treated with respect and

kindness. For example, inspectors observed staff help a distressed pupil to consider their actions and to rejoin the class with minimal disruption to their own or others' learning.

- Strong support from school staff and external agencies has been used to help pupils to improve their behaviour. When pupils need extra help, the school works closely with parents and pupils to ensure that their expectations of behaviour are clear. As a result, incidents of poor behaviour are rare and continue to diminish.
- Pupils report that incidents of bullying are rare and, when they do happen, staff are good at sorting these out.
- In class, pupils work hard to meet the expectations of their teachers. In most lessons, pupils set to work quickly and show high levels of productivity. Nevertheless, in a minority of lessons, some pupils chat and fiddle before starting work, which slows their progress.
- Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, have improved their levels of attendance in recent years. Clear reward systems are in place to promote positive attendance patterns. However, some parents do not share leaders' high aspirations regarding attendance. A small proportion of pupils are persistently absent from school.
- Pupils are tolerant and respectful towards each other, celebrating the different beliefs and cultures that are represented in the school. Pupils of all religions feel welcome and enjoy learning about the similarities and differences of each other's faiths.
- Parents are positive about the school and feel that their children are safe. They appreciate the nurture their children receive and feel well informed about their progress.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are encouraged to write at length for a range of purposes. Pupils possess a strong understanding of punctuation, spelling and grammar and use these to craft interesting texts. Pupils make strong progress in writing.
- In mathematics, pupils are given plenty of opportunities to practise their basic calculation skills. Pupils across the school, particularly the most able, use these skills to solve increasingly complex problems. As a result, the majority of pupils attain at the expected standard for their age and increasing proportions attain at a high standard.
- Pupils make strong progress in reading because they receive useful support to read regularly with an adult and to practise their sounds. Those who fall behind are identified quickly and are offered additional support to ensure that they keep up with their peers.
- In the early years and lower key stage 1, disadvantaged children and pupils are offered support to develop positive attitudes to learning and attendance. As they progress through the school, pupils are offered support where needed. This helps them to attain in line with their peers. Disadvantaged pupils make strong progress throughout the school.

- Pupils make good progress in science because they apply their English skills to record their methodology, predictions and conclusions. For example, in Year 3, pupils considered how temperature may affect the rate that ice cream melts. They used high-level vocabulary such as 'variable' and 'constant' to explain and record, with precision, what they had found out. In a small proportion of lessons, pupils' writing is not as strong as it is in English lessons.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are given effective support to access the curriculum. For example, in Year 1, staff helped a pupil to measure and cut straws to a particular length while encouraging him to do as much as possible for himself. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make strong progress throughout the curriculum.

Early years provision

Good

- Leaders possess a clear and accurate understanding of the effectiveness of the early years provision. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the setting and work with staff across the school to drive improvement continually. The recent appointment of the new early years leader has further improved the setting. The new outdoor area provides children with a great space to develop their skills in writing and mathematics. The Reception class is well placed to improve further.
- Children in the early years start with skills and understanding below those typical for children of their age. By the time they leave Reception, the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development is in line with the proportion seen nationally. This represents good progress from children's starting points.
- Staff in the early years demonstrate secure subject knowledge which they use to test children's understanding. When children make mistakes they notice quickly, helping to correct errors in their work, thinking or speech. As a result, children make strong progress and develop the skills they need to thrive in Year 1.
- Children in the early years are friendly and kind. They play well with each other regardless of differences in sex, religion or race. The Reception classes are calm and purposeful spaces where children love to learn and play.
- Staff work with parents well as they enter the early years and use their home visits to get to know the families quickly. These strong links mean that parents feel welcomed to the school and this helps families to develop positive attitudes to behaviour and attendance. The safeguarding procedures in the early years match the effective systems in the rest of the school.

School details

Unique reference number	140379
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	10053390

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Leeper
Headteacher	Salima Ducker
Head of school	Mark Wieder
Telephone number	01184 676720
Website	www.civitasacademy.co.uk
Email address	office@civitasacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Civitas Academy opened in September 2015 as part of Reach2 Academies Trust. The trustees delegate responsibility for most strategic matters to the school governing body.
- This is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school which currently only has pupils attending in Reception and Years 1 to 3.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is in line with the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 19 parts of lessons, most with senior leaders.
- In addition to discussions with parents, 16 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account, including eight free-text comments.
- A range of the school's documentation was scrutinised to gather information on: leaders' evaluation of the school's performance; systems for managing the performance of teachers; behaviour and safety of pupils; safeguarding; the progress and attainment of pupils; and curriculum leadership.
- The inspectors scrutinised the school's website to evaluate the quality of information for parents and whether the school meets statutory publishing requirements.
- The inspectors spoke to pupils to gather their views, and heard pupils read.
- The inspectors met with school leaders, members of the governing body, including the chair, and officers from the multi-academy trust.

Inspection team

Daniel Lambert, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kusum Trikha

Ofsted Inspector

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