

Inspection of Rye College

Love Lane, Rye, East Sussex TN31 7NQ

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 January 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Rye College has taken great strides forward in recent years. Work is demanding and current pupils are learning well across a wide range of subjects. Much of this is due to the strong leadership of the headteacher and the executive headteacher and extensive staff teamwork. All staff want the very best for their pupils. Pupils and parents recognise and appreciate the many improvements in the school.

There is a happy, friendly atmosphere throughout. Pupils feel safe. One pupil described the school as 'one big happy family'. Relationships are strong. Leaders have high expectations of pupils' learning and conduct. Pupils work hard to uphold the school's values of 'be proud, committed, positive, employable, kind'. Most pupils behave well in lessons and during breaktimes. If bullying occurs, staff in the school's 'Hub' quickly sort it out.

Pupils benefit from a range of extra-curricular activities, including sports clubs, revision clubs and crochet club. Some pupils are participating in a French exchange programme and a forthcoming trip to Paris and Normandy. A number of cultural visits on offer, such as to the theatre and local universities, extend opportunities to learn. The student leadership team raises money for local charities.

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

Leaders have introduced an ambitious curriculum that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), study. Key stage 3 provides a solid foundation for later learning. At key stage 4, high numbers of pupils study the three separate sciences and all study a humanities subject. The number of pupils taking French is growing, so more now have the opportunity to achieve the English Baccalaureate. Although published outcomes in 2022 were not strong, achievement is rising and current pupils are doing well.

Subject leaders have thought carefully about what they want pupils to learn and in what order. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They frequently revisit previous learning to help pupils recall it. Many pupils can clearly explain their learning. For example, Year 11 history pupils could confidently explain the effects of the Norman conquest during the medieval period. However, some pupils' progress is not always as strong as it could be because not all teachers check carefully enough that pupils have grasped key concepts before moving on to new content.

Teachers and leaders have high expectations. They expect all pupils to try hard and to complete work to a high standard. Consequently, current pupils, including many with SEND, are achieving well. However, not all staff adapt lesson content well enough to carefully meet the needs of pupils with SEND. This means they do not always learn as much as they could.

Leaders have introduced effective strategies to reduce suspensions. Staff help pupils to resolve disagreements with their peers so that repeat offences are declining. The

behaviour policy is clear, and most teachers follow it well. Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. Leaders work tirelessly to help them overcome any barriers to coming to school. A range of strategies are in place to encourage better attendance such as a breakfast club, the use of the school's multi-gym and an attendance raffle.

Pupils' personal development is prioritised. Pupils are enthusiastic about their 'life education' lessons during which they learn about British values and how to stay safe and healthy. During tutor time, pupils practise mindfulness techniques and enjoy their weekly debate about current affairs. Careers education is a strength of the school. From Year 7 onwards, pupils benefit from a rich programme, including visits from external speakers and work experience. Consequently, pupils are very well prepared for their next steps. Increasingly they are choosing ambitious courses at post-16 institutions.

Staff are loyal and committed to the school. They are very positive about the support leaders provide, including professional development for those new to teaching. They appreciate that leaders think carefully about their workload and well-being and provide high-quality training for them. Staff from the trust are relentless in their drive to fulfil the school's mission of 'creating bright futures for all'. They are very able professionals who support and challenge the school in equal measure.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding processes are very well led by highly experienced staff. All staff know what to do if they are worried about a pupil. Reporting systems are very robust, and staff attend to referrals quickly. Leaders have strong links with outside agencies, and they persist if these agencies fail to respond adequately. Training for staff is regular and of high quality. Staff from the trust monitor safeguarding arrangements rigorously.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe from the risks posed by drugs and alcohol abuse, for example, as well as online safety. They know that the 'Hub' staff will help them if they need support.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes teachers move on to new learning before checking that pupils have understood what is being taught. When this happens, some pupils struggle with the learning that follows. Leaders should ensure that teachers thoroughly check that pupils have grasped key knowledge and concepts before moving on so that pupils' learning is securely embedded in their memory.
- Some staff are not always adapting the curriculum well enough to meet the needs

of pupils with SEND. Consequently, some pupils with SEND do not achieve sufficiently well. Leaders should ensure that staff receive appropriate training to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils with SEND so that they are supported to do as well as they can.

- All pupils do not attend as regularly as they should. This means they miss out on valuable learning opportunities. Leaders should continue to prioritise their work with families so that pupils attend school more regularly.

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](#)' 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.

School details

Unique reference number	146825
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10256247
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	573
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Giles Lambert
Headteacher	Dominic Downes
Website	www.ryecollege.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Rye College joined the Aquinas Church of England Education Trust in November 2018. When its predecessor school of the same name was last inspected by Ofsted in May 2018, it was judged to be inadequate.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at three registered alternative education providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and pupils. Inspectors spoke with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, a trustee, the chair of the academy advisory committee and a representative of the local authority. An inspector also held a telephone conversation with a member of staff at each of the three alternative provisions used by the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography and French. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also visited lessons in some other subjects.
- Through discussions with leaders, representatives of the trust and the local authority, pupils and staff, inspectors considered how effectively pupils are safeguarded. They also considered the school's website and policies. They looked at safeguarding records, including the record of checks on adults working at the school.
- Inspectors spoke to staff, including early career teachers, about behaviour and their workload in school.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils and staff through the responses to Ofsted's confidential surveys. The views of parents were considered through the 88 parent responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. An inspector also held telephone conversations with two parents.

Inspection team

Paula Sargent, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Judy Rider	Ofsted Inspector
Rupert Prutton	Ofsted Inspector

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