

John Madejski Academy

125 Hartland Road, Reading, Berkshire RG2 8AF

Inspection dates

19–20 September 2017

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils have been let down by poor teaching over time. For several years, too few pupils attained the results of which they are capable.
- Standards were too low for too long but are recovering now under new leadership.
- Until recently, parents have not been able to put their confidence in the school.
- There remain some pockets of weak teaching. This holds back pupils who have much to do to catch up with other pupils nationally.
- A few teachers still have too low expectations of what pupils can achieve. They wrongly judge that pupils have limited horizons and aspirations.
- Some teachers do not make good enough use of what pupils already know, understand and can do to plan meaningful lessons.
- The school's new management information system is still missing important pieces of data. This limits teachers' planning for pupils' progress.
- Too many pupils do not take their education seriously enough and are absent too often.
- A minority of pupils are unacceptably absent persistently.
- The curriculum needs further reorganisation so that it better meets pupils' needs and enables them to compete fairly for further education places, jobs, training or apprenticeships.

The school has the following strengths

- The principal and her newly formed team are ambitious and skilful. They know exactly what to do to improve the school.
- The elite sports and performing arts programme enables pupils to pursue their creative or sporting ambitions.
- The rapidly improving teaching is leading to much better outcomes for pupils.
- Pupils show increasing respect for each other and each other's differences. The school makes a positive contribution to their personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise further levels of attendance and reduce further persistent absence, by:
 - employing even more rigorously the full range of legal strategies at leaders' disposal, such as serving fixed-penalty notices.
- Tackle the remaining areas of weakness, by:
 - spreading even further the strong practice that now exists in the school
 - continuing to be intolerant of, and acting to eradicate, any remaining poor performance
 - ensuring that the curriculum on offer is carefully designed to enable pupils to reach their potential.
- Further raise expectations of what pupils can achieve, by:
 - lifting even further pupils' aspirations with much improved careers information, advice and guidance, ambitious personal goal-setting and access to the right types of work experience
 - challenging all staff to get as much from pupils as they can
 - resetting teachers' understanding of what pupils can achieve with their support.
- Strengthen the way information about what pupils already know, understand and can do is used by teachers to inform their planning and raise standards, by:
 - ensuring that all management information is accurate
 - ensuring that data is used effectively to group pupils correctly for learning, so that they progress swiftly and attain the best possible outcomes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The John Madejski Academy is recovering from a period of instability and weak leadership. Since September 2016, when the principal joined the school, it has been through a rapid process of transformation.
- Leaders now know what they are doing. The new leadership team is inspired by the commitment and missionary-like zeal of the principal. They follow her leadership but also contribute their own expertise and experience to the immense task of turning round this underperforming school.
- The school's self-evaluation document is disarmingly honest. It is accurate, supported well with helpful information, and sets an appropriate agenda for improvement. It is reinforced with a realistic development plan and timeframe for necessary changes.
- Each leader knows the scope and boundaries of their job role. This means they are single-mindedly focused on what they need to do to make things better. For example, the consultant senior leader is responsible for ensuring that the school is a calm and orderly learning environment. He is unshakeable in his determination to have consistent application of standards of reasonable conduct.
- The school's senior leader with responsibility for inclusion and care of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SENCo) is similarly determined that all pupils will achieve as well as they can with the right support from staff. She is ably supported by another leader with responsibility for managing the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Both leaders advocate strongly on behalf of such pupils and work with other agencies to gather as much support for them as possible.
- There is growing strength in middle leaders. The subject leaders for mathematics, English and science are all strong practitioners able to provide good models of contemporary practice to less experienced or expert colleagues. Similarly, the capable leadership of the specialist sports and performing arts provision means that this is a strength of the school.
- The new leadership team in the sixth form is overhauling provision in that key stage. This is necessary as aspects of the 16 to 19 study programme are not compliant currently with the government's requirements. For example, students do not benefit from focused and regular work experience. Until recently, the careers information, advice and guidance was not good enough to help students make informed choices about the next steps in their education, employment or training.
- Collectively, leaders are improving the school with minimal financial resources. They are to be commended for making a little go a long way. Leaders make tough choices about resourcing learning. They are, however, driven by a strong set of values which mean they place pupils' learning above all else. The provision of class readers (books) to support reading during form time sessions is one example of this values-driven approach to purchasing.
- Leaders use the pupil premium creatively to extend opportunities for disadvantaged pupils. Those studying GCSE music, for example, benefit from subsidised instrumental

lessons paid for out of the pupil premium. Disadvantaged pupils' participation in enriching educational visits is also supported by funding from this grant. Ingredients used for cooking in the catering BTEC National Diploma are funded for such pupils from this money. Each penny is accounted for carefully.

- Leaders are aware that the current curriculum is not helping all pupils attain their ambitions and goals. Notably, there remains weak provision in design and technology, as noted at the last inspection. Leaders have struggled to recruit suitably qualified staff. The lack of provision of a range of modern foreign languages also limits possibilities for those who might otherwise meet the government's EBacc standard. Currently, only seven pupils in Year 11 are studying GCSE French.
- Some pupils do not have access to vocational programmes at level 2 in the qualifications framework which would be better suited to their needs. Similarly, some students on 16 to 19 study programmes are continuing to study at level 2 because there is not a suitable pathway at level 3 for them.
- Conversely, the curriculum is designed to ensure that all pupils have access to personal, social, health and economic education. They learn explicitly about British values. This is supported in other aspects of the taught curriculum, such as in English, where, in Year 7, pupils learn about the contribution of the ancient Greeks to the rule of law and democracy. The school makes an increasingly good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Governance of the school

- There remain questions over the future governance and sponsorship arrangements of the school. These need to be resolved quickly.
- The present chair of the governing body and newly recruited governors are skilfully supporting the principal in all her efforts to improve the school. Governors have reorganised themselves to focus sharply on each key aspect of the school's work.
- Governors provide useful notes of their visits to the school to check on progress against the improvement planning documents. Governors check that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.
- Governors also check that leaders are able to maximise the limited funding they receive. The school is currently not in receipt of funding for pupils who have education, health and care plans relating to their special educational needs and/or disabilities. Governors ensure that the pupil premium is used wisely to support disadvantaged pupils' learning and development.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. This aspect of the school's work is thorough.
- Leaders and managers ensure that anyone wishing to work or volunteer at the school is checked as 'fit and proper'. The records of these checks are stored securely and maintained to a high standard.

- Leaders ensure that up-to-date health and safety requirements, such as portable appliance tests, fire appliance checks and access control equipment all meet contemporary standards.
- Leaders ensure that all activities are assessed for risks carefully. This includes travel to off-site learning or competitive events.
- Leaders are committed to keeping pupils safe. While redesigning the curriculum, they are taking account of the need for direct teaching on safeguarding matters. Inspectors observed assemblies focused on staying safe online. They also saw documents relating to the school's plans to teach about alcohol and substance misuse, safety in cars, safety in relationships, the risks and dangers of child sexual exploitation and how to spot or avoid radicalisation.
- Pupils told inspectors about the school's efforts to keep them safe and unanimously agreed that they feel safe in school. They also said that this was not the case a year ago.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Weak teaching over time led to consistently low outcomes. There are still improvements needed to help teachers focus on tackling barriers to learning, to help pupils who are behind catch up quickly.
- Upon joining the school, the principal immediately began a ruthless process of improving the quality of teaching. This began with the setting of a framework for teaching to which all teachers must adhere.
- The framework for teaching is sensible. It sets out what every teacher must do to prepare for each lesson, reasonable expectations for how lessons will be conducted and a manageable set of requirements for providing pupils with feedback about how well they are doing. Most teachers work within this framework successfully.
- The principal also insisted that each subject leader, usually in collaboration with their teams, publish an overarching plan for pupils' learning. These plans indicate what pupils should be learning, in an organised, logical sequence from Year 7 right the way through to the end of Year 11. The plans are, in most cases, aligned accurately to the current national curriculum or GCSE specifications. Teachers now know what they have to teach and when.
- The principal has also put in place a straightforward process for assessing pupils' progress. All pupils are provided with helpful resources that set out what they need to know in each subject. Parents like these tools because they can help their children learn core pieces of information. At fixed points in the year, pupils' knowledge is assessed so that leaders can check their progress accurately. Teachers are now held to account stringently for the rates of progress in their classes.
- Teachers like this structure and the intense sense of purpose for their work. Teachers also like the renewed belief they have that they will be supported when problems arise. Teachers refreshingly told inspectors that they want even better tools to help them teach even more skilfully. They particularly like the highly focused nature of the new

performance management system and the strengthened professional learning opportunities they now receive.

- There are very few teaching assistants. Those that the school can afford are put to effective use, mainly to support, in class, pupils at risk of falling behind. Teaching assistants create useful records of the work they have done to support these pupils' learning.
- The school has implemented a necessary and relentlessly enforced strategy to raise standards of literacy. All staff contribute admirably where they can. For example, they: lead guided reading sessions in key stage 3 form groups; support moments in the week when pupils stop what they are doing and read; take the risk of reading out loud in character, and with a range of voices, to model active reading; and devote time in key stage 4 tutorial sessions to English interventions. Some form time is also used wisely for topping up learning in mathematics.
- Currently, these whole-school strategies are aimed at everyone. This is essential to tackle the legacy of weak teaching. However, leaders are aware that the method needs to be refined so that pupils, particularly the most able, can experience teaching that extends, enriches and stretches them. There are some very bright students who disappointingly told inspectors that their aim was for a grade 7 at GCSE when they clearly have the potential to attain the highest grade 9, especially in mathematics.
- This latter example shows that the main challenge facing leaders now is to put back into this community self-confidence, self-belief and the ambition to be the best it can be. Some teachers are still not communicating clearly enough how well pupils can do or contributing regularly to the raising of aspirations.
- The SENCo oversees effective support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities within a very limited and dwindling set of financial resources.
- All lessons are conducted in a positive atmosphere. Generally, relationships between staff and pupils are good. There is rare disruption to learning. Sometimes inspectors found this to be caused by pupils incorrectly placed in the wrong set. Some of these pupils were angry and/or bored. The new management information system is not yet giving leaders precise enough information to get these decisions right.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. This is because the community as a whole lacks self-belief and too many pupils suffer from low self-esteem, which holds learning back.
- Leaders are aware of the scale and scope of this challenge. Now that they have got back control of the school and a staff team capable of making the necessary difference, they are focusing more intently on developing pupils' sense of self and well-being.
- Adults clearly demonstrate appropriate levels of respect and conduct. They speak politely to each other and this approach is being followed increasingly well by pupils.

- The school's improved structures and processes, such as lining up in the morning, at the end of break, and lunchtime, are helping to develop a sense of self-discipline and order among the pupils.
- Leaders' clear expectations about the equipment pupils should have with them in school is helping pupils learn the importance of being ready for learning and suitably prepared. This is helping them get ready for further education or work.
- Leaders' explicit rules about standards of dress are adhered to well. Pupils are increasingly taking pride in wearing the uniform smartly. They are also taking much better care with the presentation of their work. This is because they understand the very simple set of expectations about how they should keep their workbooks.
- The school's provision of multiple performance opportunities, including participation in overseas festivals, contributes extremely well to pupils' personal development. The ambitious productions, staged regularly, symbolise what can be achieved with John Madejski Academy pupils when adults take an interest and believe in them.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Attendance is too low, both historically and, already, this academic year. Levels of persistent absence are stubbornly high.
- The number of pupils permanently excluded is falling but remains a cause for concern. In addition, too many pupils are still excluded for short periods for behavioural reasons, although these numbers are also decreasing. The internal seclusion room provides a stepping stone for pupils who have been excluded to ease their way back into learning. Here, pupils undertake structured work under the watchful eye of an experienced manager. It is also used successfully as a means of attempting to avoid fixed-term exclusions.
- The conduct of pupils in lessons and around the school is generally good. Leaders have created a calm and orderly environment. Pupils treat each other with respect. They respect each other's differences. Notably, they are intolerant of any racism they observe. They agree that more work is necessary with some pupils who exhibit homophobic attitudes which are still prevalent, they say, in the local community.
- Pupils commented that levels of bullying have reduced considerably since the beginning of the academic year in 2016. All pupils were able to say what they would do if they became aware of bullying and all confirmed that they felt the school would deal with it firmly and fairly.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The serious underperformance of this school over time means that all publicly held information shows poor outcomes for pupils.
- Many pupils have large gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding, as well as attaining low levels overall in public examinations. Some have not caught up on missed chunks of learning from earlier in their school career.

- At present, the school's curriculum limits pupils' chances of attaining well in the government's current Progress 8 measurement. As such, this measure is likely to fall below the floor standard when results for 2017 are published later this year.
- However, a better-than-expected number of pupils attained a grade 5 pass in mathematics in the new GCSE in 2017. Similarly, a good number attained a grade 5 pass in English in the new GCSE in 2017. Leaders are now focused on ensuring that pupils in the current Year 11 who are on track to repeat this in GCSE examinations in 2018 are sufficiently well prepared to hit this important milestone in both subjects.
- Similarly, much better teaching over the last year in science meant that more pupils than before achieved well in GCSE core and additional science, with over half attaining a good pass.
- Standards in the elite sports programmes are high, with, for example, value-added performance strong in the BTEC National Diploma level 3 vocational sport programme. The value added to younger pupils' learning by participation in this programme is yet to be measured in examination outputs but these pupils are already displaying greater self-confidence and willingness to learn.
- The impact of direct interventions with pupils needing to catch up rapidly with reading skills is impressive. For example, one group of 10 pupils made two years' worth of progress using focused schemes. Leaders have in place the right tools to accelerate learning.
- Disadvantaged pupils are now doing as well as their classmates. In individual instances they are doing better against some measures. Inevitably, they still lag behind all other pupils nationally in all subjects because the overall performance of the school was historically substandard. Differences between them and their classmates are, though, on a clearly diminishing trajectory.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are getting a much better deal now at the school. Previously, provision for them was unstructured and arranged in a haphazard way. This is being addressed relentlessly, despite the lack of warranted funding from the local authority.
- The reality is that some pupils are at least three years behind their chronological age in terms of reading. This is a significant outcome of the legacy of poor teaching in this and other feeder schools. All pupils join the school with much lower than average starting points. This means teachers have to encourage extremely rapid progress to ensure that they catch up quickly. This process is undoubtedly underway.
- Outcomes are no longer inadequate because the hard measures now in place are showing signs of extensive recovery. As important are the improvements to other outcomes such as pupils' better readiness for learning, greater sense of well-being, increased self-confidence and, for a substantial number, high level performance outputs in acting, musicianship and dancing.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- This important key stage was managed poorly in the past. Aspects of the 16 to 19 study programmes are not compliant with the government's requirements. Students do not have access to good-quality work experience placements.
- Standards overall on level 3 academic programmes do not compare well with those at other providers nationally. The range of qualifications available for students is unduly influenced by the school's ability to recruit and retain appropriately skilled subject experts able to lead learning successfully at A Level.
- Retention from the school's Year 11 into the sixth form is weak, despite the heavily directed guidance pupils received historically aimed at encouraging them to 'stay on'.
- Conversely, recruitment to the elite sports programme has been high to the current Year 12 as a result of stretching targets set by the principal. Pupils who completed key stage 4 elsewhere have opted positively to join the school to pursue this programme. Support for the programme from Reading Football Club and Reading Rockets basketball club lend considerable weight and reputation to the programmes. The school's founding sponsor, Sir John Madejski, is rightly proud of the achievements of this part of the school.
- Retention is also reasonably strong from Year 12 into 13 with 93% staying on to complete the academic pathway and 90% staying on to complete vocational studies. Some choose to pause their studies when they have gained enough credit to attain a pass or merit in their BTEC National Diploma.
- Attainment on these level 3 vocational programmes is strong and compares well with value added measures for students on the same programmes nationally.
- Pupils resitting English in 2017 attained well, with over three quarters passing the GCSE. Results were less positive for those resitting their mathematics GCSE. Leaders are taking decisive action to ensure that all students achieve these important milestones in the coming year.
- Leadership of the 16 to 19 study programmes has been taken over by a new sixth-form team. Already, leaders have set about making the timetables more purposeful for each student. They are aware of the shortcomings and are acting quickly to rectify those aspects in need of immediate change.
- Leaders are aware of the need to enable good progression for each student from their starting point in the sixth form. For example, they are acting to ensure that those who have already succeeded at level 2 move to a core learning aim at level 3.
- Leaders are also planning to review and revise the curriculum offer for September 2018 to make the sixth form as appealing as possible for as many students as they can.
- Attendance in the sixth form is similarly patchy to that found in key stages 3 and 4. Students' behaviour reflects their greater maturity and independence. They participate well in lessons and, for the most part, form positive relationships with teachers.
- Improvements to the 16 to 19 study programmes are being enacted with as much energy and enthusiasm as the changes being brought about in the rest of the school.

School details

Unique reference number	130247
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	10040154

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	698
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	131
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mary Riall
Principal	Laura Ellener
Telephone number	0118 9370200
Website	www.johnmadejskiacademy.co.uk
Email address	office@johnmadejskiacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 November 2015

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about all of the results attained by pupils in public examinations, and a link to the performance league tables, on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about all of the results attained by pupils in public examinations, and a link to the performance league tables, on its website.
- The school is currently a stand-alone academy. Negotiations are underway to incorporate the school within a multi-academy trust.

- The school is an average-sized secondary school. Numbers in key stages 3 and 4 are lower than were expected when the school was founded. Numbers in the sixth form are growing, mainly due to the elite sports programmes which attract students from across the town and further afield.
- There are more boys than girls.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is nearly double the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from Black and minority ethnic families is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- The number of pupils who leave or join the school other than at the end of a key stage is well above the national average.
- The school serves a community which has higher than average levels of deprivation.
- The school has a partnership with Cranbury College, which provides alternative provision for pupils who have been or are at risk of being permanently excluded.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection began as a special measures monitoring visit under section 8 of the Education Act, 2005. At the end of the inspection, the team had gathered sufficient evidence to conclude that the school no longer required special measures. Her Majesty's Inspector deemed the inspection to be a section 5 inspection and removed the school from special measures, subject to moderation and quality assurance.
- Inspectors observed learning in 36 parts of lessons. Over three quarters of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also observed assemblies and tutor sessions.
- Inspectors held regular meetings with senior leaders. The lead inspector met with those responsible for governance and the Department for Education's proposed sponsor designate.
- Inspectors canvassed the opinions of many pupils and held formal meetings with two groups of pupils, one from the sixth form.
- Inspectors spoke informally with many staff and conducted a formal meeting with four teachers at different stages of their careers.
- Inspectors met with a group of parents and took into account 14 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey tool.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of the school's information, with a particular focus on its development plans and self-evaluation documents. Information about current pupils' progress was scrutinised alongside information about current pupils' attendance.

Inspection team

Simon Hughes, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Krista Dawkins

Ofsted Inspector

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