

**SPECIAL  
EDITION**

# Arrow News



## Outstanding In All Categories

### Overall effectiveness

**Outstanding**

Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Outstanding**

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Outstanding**

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Outstanding**

Outcomes for pupils

**Outstanding**

16 to 19 study programmes

**Outstanding**

It is with great pleasure that I take the unusual step of writing to you as parents and carers at the start of a new term. I would like to share some news, that we as a school community, are extremely proud of. Some of you may already be aware that on the 4th and 5th December 2018 we were visited by Ofsted who came to inspect our school. The inspection team was made up of 5 inspectors and they visited for two days.

The inspection report (enclosed within this Special Edition of Arrow News) celebrates much of what makes Arrow Vale so special. The comments about the students in particular were extremely pleasing. The relationships between staff and students and the pride the students take in themselves and their school was obvious for the inspectors to see.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all parents and carers for your continued support on into 2019. With opportunities for exciting new projects, extracurricular trips and new learning experiences, not to mention GCSE and A Level exams to sit, this is an exciting time to be part of Arrow Vale Community.

**Ian Mellor, Principal**





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“Pupils conduct themselves in exemplary fashion in school”



“Outcomes in mathematics and science are exceptionally high because of the very high quality of leadership and teaching in these subjects and effective partnerships with the feeder middle schools”



“Leaders ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding”



“Leadership and the quality of teaching in the sixth form are excellent, with all students making sustained progress”



“Students are very well prepared for the next stage in their learning, which is reflected in the high proportion going on to further education, training or employment”





“Excellent relationships between teachers and pupils contribute to pupils growing in confidence in their learning”



“Pupils show positive attitudes towards their learning, including resilience. Pupils are willing to tackle difficult and challenging problems, for example Pythagoras in Mathematics and cell structure in Science”



“Pupils are respectful of each other’s views and of those from different cultures and beliefs to their own”



“The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils’ appearance is smart. They have pride in themselves and their school community”



“Leadership of the Sixth Form is very strong”

“The behaviour of Sixth Form students is exemplary”



“Leaders have high aspirations for all their pupils including those who are disadvantaged”

# Arrow Vale RSA Academy

Green Sward Lane, Matchborough West, Redditch, Worcestershire B98 0EN

## Inspection dates

4–5 December 2018

| Overall effectiveness                        | Outstanding |
|--|-------------|
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   | Outstanding |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Outstanding |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare  | Outstanding |
| Outcomes for pupils                          | Outstanding |
| 16 to 19 study programmes                    | Outstanding |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Outstanding |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- Outcomes are improving very rapidly from a dip in 2017 as a result of the effective work by leaders at all levels, governors and trustees.
- Leaders have taken prompt and effective action to address previous weaknesses in teaching and outcomes in some subjects.
- The challenge and support provided by the trustees and governors for leaders and teaching staff are highly effective in bringing about improvements.
- Outcomes in mathematics and science are exceptionally high because of the very high quality of leadership and teaching in these subjects and effective partnerships with the feeder middle schools.
- Assessment of pupils' work is accurate and rigorous.
- Leadership and the quality of teaching in the sixth form are excellent, with all students making sustained progress.
- Pupils and students are very well prepared for the next stage in their learning, which is reflected in the high proportion going on to further education, training or employment.
- The curriculum is very well suited to the needs, choices and aspirations of pupils. There is a very strong emphasis on the arts.
- Pupils' personal development, welfare and behaviour are outstanding. Pupils conduct themselves in an exemplary fashion in school.
- Teachers develop employability skills in lessons highly effectively, and encourage teamwork and oral and written presentational skills very well.
- Parents, carers and pupils regard the school very highly and few have any well-founded concerns.
- Outcomes are improving for the most able pupils, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- While pupils do well in English, geography and history, their outcomes are not yet as high compared to other subjects.
- Uptake of modern foreign languages at GCSE and in the sixth form is low compared to the national average.

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that the quality of teaching and outcomes in English, geography and history are as high as they are in other subjects by:
  - drawing more effectively on the strong practice in other subjects, especially in mathematics and science
  - making sure that teachers plan activities in geography and history that better meet the needs of pupils, especially the most able
  - making sure that teachers develop further pupils' analytical skills in English in order to achieve the highest possible outcomes for the most able pupils.
- Encourage a greater uptake of modern foreign languages at key stage 4 and in the sixth form by:
  - improving links with the feeder middle schools and lower schools to ensure that pupils make a more effective transition into Year 9
  - reviewing the key stage 3 curriculum for French and Spanish.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- Since the current principal was appointed in 2017, there have been accelerated improvements in outcomes for pupils. This has been achieved with effective support and challenge from the Central Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) Academies Trust and governors, and support from other senior leaders. Subject leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development in their departments. Leaders demonstrate capacity for further improvement.
- Where teacher underperformance has been identified, leaders have been prompt to challenge and address it effectively. Where staff have had support plans, this has led to rapid improvements in performance. As a result, where outcomes are lower at GCSE in English, geography and history compared to other subjects, they are improving rapidly. However, they are not yet as good as those achieved in mathematics, science and other subjects.
- Leaders have high aspirations for all their pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. This is clear in the school's approach to teaching and learning, summed up by the motto 'Be the best that you can be'. A wide range of destinations are encouraged for pupils and students, including entry to Oxford and Cambridge Universities, apprenticeships and the armed forces.
- Leaders of the trust commissioned an external review of the pupil premium expenditure in September 2018. It identified low reading ages as the main barrier to progress for disadvantaged pupils. Recent improvements in the quality of English teaching – including a targeted reading programme – are helping disadvantaged pupils to make better progress.
- Teaching for the most able pupils is improving, with the appointment of staff to monitor their progress and hold one-to-one meetings with those whose progress is not as high as expected. A detailed programme of 'super-curricular' activities is in place, including clubs, debates, trips (including to Oxford University), motivational speakers and visits from role models from the worlds of business and law.
- Well-targeted additional funding and support for pupils with SEND – together with high-quality teaching – are significantly improving outcomes for these pupils.
- The key stage 3 curriculum is based on identifying the knowledge, understanding, mastery and skills required before pupils move on to key stage 4. Links with the middle schools – already well established in mathematics and science – are developing in other subjects, including English and modern foreign languages. The wide range of academic and vocational options at key stage 4 ensure that almost any combination of subjects is possible for pupils to study, as they have a free but guided choice within the options. The small number of pupils in alternative provision are monitored closely to ensure that it is appropriate for their needs.
- Leaders support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. This is reflected in the strong performing arts curriculum, including music, dance and drama and productions such as 'Les Misérables', which make full use of the



school's excellent theatre facilities. The well-designed 'learning for life' curriculum encourages pupils to consider topical issues through different faith perspectives. The school's work to develop fundamental British values and to tackle extremism is highly effective through partnership with the police, workshops and performances from an external theatre group.

- A detailed professional development programme is in place for teachers, including for newly qualified teachers and those in their second year of teaching to encourage retention beyond the second year. There are opportunities for teachers to develop their subject knowledge by following an aspiring leadership programme and conducting research projects.
- There are well-established partnerships with parents. In a recent school survey where 300 responded, almost all said they would recommend the school to another parent. The majority agreed that the school is well led and managed. Parents can meet staff at curriculum events to support the school's aim in raising their and their children's ambitions.
- Leaders recognise that there is more to do to encourage a greater uptake of modern foreign languages at GCSE. Due the current curriculum structure in Year 9 and the starting points of pupils who join from different feeder middle schools, not as many pupils opt for a language at GCSE or A level compared to the national average.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school very well. There have been significant improvements in outcomes since they challenged the 2017 results. In particular, they have supported additional funding for the following successful strategies:
  - consolidating staffing in English
  - appointing a senior lead for attendance
  - reviewing the curriculum
  - improving teaching for the most able pupils.
- Governors ensure – through regular meetings with designated leaders and checks of policies, training and records – that leaders meet all their statutory responsibilities for safeguarding. Governors recently commissioned an external safeguarding review to ensure that the school's policies and procedures comply with the latest government guidance.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding. They make all appropriate checks to ensure that policies and procedures are in place, up to date and consistently applied. Staff training is regular and complies with the latest Department for Education requirements and guidance. Referrals are timely and include where pupils

may be at risk of radicalisation or extremism. The school monitors the safety and well-being of those few pupils who attend off-site alternative provision.

- Pupils spoken to report that they feel safe and secure. They said there are no 'no-go' areas in the school and that bullying is rare. They know who to go to if they have a worry or concern. Assemblies and 'learning for life' lessons on the timetable have taught them to keep safe regarding bullying and online safety and alerted them to the dangers of knife crime, drugs and child sexual exploitation. All parents who responded to the school survey agreed that their children feel safe in school. A majority agreed that the school deals effectively with bullying.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Outstanding

- Excellent relationships between teachers and pupils contribute to pupils growing in confidence in their learning.
- In mathematics, there is an effective approach to teaching concepts and an explicit focus on teaching fluency. Pupils are encouraged to give well-reasoned explanations for their answers.
- There is a clear programme of regular assessments across the school. Assessments are accurate and give a clear indication of the progress pupils have made and the next steps required in their learning. In lessons, ongoing assessment ensures that pupils receive the support they need in a timely fashion. Feedback to pupils is in line with the school's policy.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND are highlighted by teachers for identification in planning and marking. Targeted questions – including those for identified disadvantaged pupils – ensure that all pupils remain engaged and focused on their learning. Teachers' questioning is probing to ensure that pupils develop a deeper understanding. Explanations are clear when addressing any misconceptions.
- The impact of the school's comprehensive professional development programme on pupils' improved outcomes is apparent in teaching. Teachers have very secure subject knowledge. Where non-subject specialists teach pupils, those teachers are supported well by the programme, which includes developing subject expertise.
- Pupils' literacy skills are enhanced in other subjects, such as science, where there is a clear focus on the extension of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Teachers support pupils' employability skills well by developing pupils' oral and written skills and by enabling them to work as part of a team, solve problems or present their ideas to the whole class.
- Lessons start promptly, and little time is lost during the 50 minutes. Well-planned challenging activities ensure that pupils enjoy their learning. Pupils respond positively to challenge and there is no low-level disruption.
- However, there is not a sufficient level of challenge for the most able pupils in history and geography. Not all pupils in English have sufficient analytical skills to achieve the highest possible outcomes.



## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Outstanding

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to support pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils show positive attitudes towards their learning, including resilience. Pupils are willing to tackle difficult and challenging problems, for example Pythagoras in mathematics and cell structure in science.
- Pupils are respectful of each other's views and of those from different cultures and beliefs to their own.
- Pupils spoken to report that the extra-curricular performing arts – for example drama – offered excellent opportunities for them to develop their skills and confidence.
- Pupils have numerous opportunities to take responsibility for leadership through the prefect system, the school council and by chairing committees. They are involved with charities in the local community, supporting foodbanks and delivering Christmas hampers to local residents.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next steps in their careers and education. Year 10 pupils have work experience which – together with detailed careers information and teaching through the learning for life programme – enables them to make well-informed choices about their future steps in key stages 4 and 5.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils spoken to agreed that what inspectors saw was typical. Pupils' appearance is smart. They have pride in themselves and their school community.
- There has been a significant reduction in the number of incidents recorded for homophobic bullying, which are recorded separately from other types of bullying. The introduction of a lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender group in the school has successfully drawn wider attention to the issue for pupils.
- The rate of exclusions is low, with few repeat offences.
- Incidents of low-level disruptive behaviour in lessons are extremely rare.
- Pupils arrive in lessons in an orderly fashion ready to learn.
- Attendance is rapidly improving for all pupils – including disadvantaged pupils – following a decline in 2017. Attendance is still below the national average for disadvantaged pupils, despite rapid improvements over the last two years. Leaders have a relentless focus on improving attendance.
- The majority of parents agreed that the school makes sure that its pupils are well behaved.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Outstanding

- After a significant dip in 2017, outcomes are rapidly improving. Pupils have made significant progress in mathematics and science over time but progress has not been as strong in English and humanities subjects.
- Since they joined in Year 9, from their typically low outcomes in key stage 2 – especially in reading – current pupils have made very strong progress across subjects. As a result, outcomes have improved, including in those subjects where pupils' progress fell sharply in 2017.
- Where outcomes are exceptionally high in mathematics and science, it is – in part – as a result of close partnerships developed over some time with the main feeder middle schools. This has ensured that pupils are well on track for achieving high outcomes when they join in Year 9. Similar work in English is less well developed. Pupils have very low reading ages when they join the school in Year 9.
- Outcomes for GCSE results in 2018 have yet to be published. According to the school's analysis, pupils have maintained high outcomes in mathematics and science and have made good progress in other subjects, including photography, art, drama, sport, music and business. Although rapidly improving, outcomes were not as high in English, history and geography as in other subjects.
- Outcomes for different groups of pupils are rising over time. Since joining the school, the most able pupils are now making better progress. However, they did not make enough progress in 2017 or 2018 over the five years from the end of Year 6. The school's most recent assessment information shows that a strong focus on identifying and providing enrichment for the most able pupils is helping them to make better progress.
- Where progress of particular pupil groups is not as high as that of other pupils, it is improving strongly. Current disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND are catching up with all pupils nationally. This is because of the effective targeting of resources and high-quality support for these pupils in lessons.
- The proportion of pupils who are entered for English Baccalaureate subjects at GCSE is not as high as nationally because of the low uptake of modern foreign languages. Pupils do very well in a range of other subjects, where performing arts are a strength, and in vocational qualifications.
- By the end of Year 11, pupils are very well prepared for the next stage in their learning or career development. A higher proportion of pupils compared to the national average go on to further education, training or employment.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

## Outstanding

- Leadership of the sixth form is very strong. Teaching is highly effective, which – over time – leads to students' significant progress. Their attainment is well above average. Students are able to demonstrate their deepening understanding of their work, for example on the law of momentum in physics.

- Students receive effective guidance and support regarding their next steps and future careers. A very high proportion of students go on to education, training or employment, with a significant proportion taking up university places. They have high aspirations to go to Russell Group universities, including Oxford and Cambridge.
- All students in Year 12 undertake a minimum of a one-week work experience in a wide variety of relevant occupations.
- The school adopts a flexible approach to sixth-form recruitment, admitting students who demonstrate a passion or aptitude for the subject. Retention rates are high, but leaders do not shy away from recommending alternative routes if they feel this would better suit a student.
- The progress made by the small number of students taking GCSE resits in English and mathematics in the sixth form is high.
- The behaviour of sixth-form students is exemplary. The student leadership programme enables members of the sixth form to lead through chairing committees, acting as prefects and providing mentoring and support in lessons. Their rate of attendance is very good.
- The proportion of students taking a modern foreign language at A level is small.



# RSA ACADEMY ARROW VALE

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