

Inspection of a good school: Icen Academy

Gloucester Avenue, Shrub End, Colchester, Essex CO2 9AZ

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 November 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The head of school is Karen Jackson. This school is part of Connected Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Ceri Jones, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Barry Collyer.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at Icen Academy. They enjoy attending school, and most do so regularly. Pupils value the way in which the school sees them as the unique individuals they are. They learn about the many differences in their community and the wider world. They know their opinions and beliefs will be listened to and respected. Pupils confidently share these beliefs in a variety of ways, for example when speaking in assemblies about the significance of festivals such as Diwali to their faith.

Pupils typically behave well. Clear routines and high expectations, which have started recently, help pupils to understand what is expected of them. Most pupils respond well to these raised expectations. Where pupils struggle with their behaviour, the school supports them to improve it. Pupils value being able to focus more on their learning. Disruptions to lessons are far rarer than they used to be.

The focus on sharing books and stories during 'book talk' sessions is particularly enjoyable. Pupils listen well as their classmates and teachers read these stories aloud. Pupils are benefiting from the recent improvements the school has made to both the curriculum and behaviour. Their understanding of important knowledge is developing. However, some pupils have gaps in their learning. This makes it harder for them to tackle new ideas.

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

The school and the trust want pupils to achieve well. They have recently reviewed the curriculum. It identifies the important knowledge that pupils should remember. For most subjects, the school has recently placed this knowledge in a logical order. Teachers are beginning to see the positive impact of these changes on pupils' knowledge. However, this work is in its infancy.

In the few subjects where the curriculum has not needed to be redesigned, pupils' knowledge is typically secure. They mostly have the prior knowledge they need to help them learn new information. For example, pupils use their understanding of multiplication facts to explain their mathematical thinking. Where the curriculum is newer, pupils are beginning to secure their understanding of important content. Although this is improving, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge.

Reading is at the heart of the curriculum. The school carefully plans time for pupils to talk about books, stories and words. This inspires pupils to read. The school identifies with precision those pupils who find reading hard. These pupils are beginning to get extra help with reading, but this is not consistently in place. Approaches to supporting pupils are very new. There are occasions when pupils do not learn consistent strategies to read unfamiliar words. Sometimes, pupils who find reading hard struggle to read information given to them in other subjects.

There are systems in place to identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school and the trust are resolute in their determination to provide the support that pupils with SEND need in order to learn well. When support is precise, pupils access the same curriculum as their peers. For example, thoughtful use of technology helps identified pupils to settle into their learning at the start of the school day. However, support plans for pupils with SEND are, in places, not specific enough. This makes it harder for staff to know exactly what precise support pupils with SEND need. This means that there are occasions when some pupils do not access the curriculum as well as they should.

The school prioritises pupils' wider development. Pupils benefit from the opportunities provided. Competing in sporting events both in and outside school helps to develop pupils' talents and interests. The girls' football team is proud to represent the school. Taking part in events such as 'speed watch' with Essex Police helps to instil in pupils a sense of right and wrong.

Trustees understand what the school does well and where it needs to improve. There is a range of expertise and knowledge on the trust board to support and hold the school to account. Trustees ensure that the changes the school makes are carefully considered. This helps to support staff to manage their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Consistent strategies to support pupils at the early stages of learning to read are not fully in place. As a result, some pupils do not learn to read quickly enough. They struggle to access the curriculum in some lessons. The school and the trust should ensure that they continue to provide staff with the training and guidance they need to support pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read.
- In some subjects, pupils have gaps in their knowledge. This makes it hard for them to make connections when new content is introduced. The school should ensure that it carefully identifies what these gaps in knowledge are. It should then use this information to adapt teaching so that pupils secure the prior knowledge they need in order to access new learning.
- Some support plans for pupils with SEND lack precision. This makes it hard for staff to put in place the precise strategies these pupils need. The school and the trust should ensure that all staff understand how to plan for, and meet the needs of, pupils with SEND effectively.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2018.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	142001
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10318628
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	194
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Barry Collyer
CEO of trust	Ceri Jones
Headteacher	Karen Jackson (Head of School)
Website	www.iceniacademyclmat.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	19 and 20 June 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been recent and significant changes to leadership across the trust and the school. The chief executive officer joined the trust on a part-time basis in September 2022. This became a full-time position in September 2023. The head of school started in September 2023.
- Most trustees are new this year. The chair of trustees took on this responsibility in March 2023.
- The school currently uses alternative provision for a small number of pupils at another registered school in the trust.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, he discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also listened to pupils read with a familiar member of staff. Examples of pupils' writing across the school were also considered.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interest first.
- The inspector held meetings with the head of school, the chief executive officer, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, staff, the chair of trustees and pupils.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including behaviour logs, bullying records, pupil records, records of trustee meetings, school improvement visit notes, school development plans and school policies.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspector spoke to staff throughout the inspection and considered responses to the online staff survey.

Inspection team

Michael Williams, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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