

Isca Academy

Address: Earl Richards Road South, Exeter, Devon, EX2 6AP

Unique reference number (URN): 139682

Inspection report: 7 July 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Over time, pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 11 have been close to the national average in almost all subjects. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who face barriers to their learning achieve well from their starting points.

Pupils currently at the school achieve well. They are proud of their work and enjoy the subjects they study. Generally, pupils have the literacy and numeracy skills and knowledge they need to follow the curriculum and achieve successfully. Leaders have established a range of literacy and numeracy interventions to support pupils' progress. However, a minority of pupils struggle with writing about what they have learned in their respective subjects. This can limit their ability to communicate the depth of their understanding.

Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their lives, with an increasing number progressing to further education or training pathways.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have constructed a well-sequenced, knowledge-rich curriculum that enables pupils to build on their prior knowledge in the subjects they study. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), access the curriculum with support, when necessary, to ensure success.

Staff's professional learning supports them to teach the curriculum well. Their subject knowledge and understanding of how best to teach it are strong. For example, they use talk and questioning appropriately to deepen pupils' understanding. They generally adapt activities with skill so that pupils with SEND can follow the curriculum successfully.

Pupils read regularly for pleasure. Those pupils who struggle with reading receive effective support to catch up with their peers. Teachers also routinely teach subject-specific vocabulary. However, although pupils achieve well, the focus on supporting pupils' writing across all subjects of the curriculum is not consistent. At times, teachers do not use assessment information precisely to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. This means that some pupils' misconceptions are not remedied.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have high expectations of all pupils, including those who face barriers to their learning. They have strengthened provision for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). To support the swift identification of pupils' needs, leaders have enhanced transition arrangements from primary to secondary school. This helps staff to understand pupils' starting points so they can put appropriate support in place from the outset.

Leaders and staff monitor the progress of pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils closely. They amend support strategies as pupils' needs change. This means that provision remains responsive and effective. As a result, pupils are supported to follow the curriculum successfully. Overall, pupils with SEND and those facing other difficulties achieve well.

Leaders use the additional funding they receive to support disadvantaged pupils effectively. They identify the barriers to pupils' success and set out strategies based on evidence of what works to reduce them. They review and adapt the strategy regularly to ensure that it has a positive impact on all disadvantaged pupils. Leaders use alternative provision when needed to support pupils' educational opportunities.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders are ambitious for the academic, social and emotional success of all pupils. They lead with a clear vision that is shared by most members of staff. Leaders model the values and expectations they set for staff and pupils. They consistently make decisions in the best interests of pupils, especially for those who are vulnerable and face barriers to their learning.

Leaders evaluate the strengths of the school and the areas for improvement with precision. They take appropriate and timely action to drive improvements across all aspects of the school's work. For example, they have created a well-structured professional learning programme for staff. Leaders carefully check that the strategies they have put in place have the intended impact. This means that leaders and staff remain sharply focused on continually developing the quality of provision across the school.

Leaders use the expertise and specialist advice of external agencies, including the local authority, as well as from other schools within the trust. This has enabled leaders to strengthen the quality of provision for vulnerable pupils and to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are secure.

Governors provide robust challenge and support in equal measure. They understand the duties expected of them and ensure that they are met. They are strategic in their oversight of safeguarding and the monitoring of the school's work. Most staff feel valued and appreciate leaders' support for their wellbeing and workload. They are proud to work at the school. Leaders have taken action to improve relationships with parents and carers so that this is supportive and collaborative.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have created a coherent and broad personal development programme that incorporates religious education, citizenship, enrichment and relationships, sex and health education (RSHE). Pupils have many opportunities to develop their understanding of their role as citizens in modern Britain through voting for student leaders and engaging with the local community. Most pupils' positive conduct around the school reflects the ways in which the curriculum successfully develops their character.

Pupils benefit from an age-appropriate RSHE curriculum that helps them to understand what constitutes healthy relationships and how to keep themselves safe. This prepares them well as they move towards adulthood. Pupils learn how to stay safe when online and there is a

strong focus on supporting them to be mentally resilient and healthy. Well-trained specialist staff and mental health practitioners provide effective support.

Pupils benefit from an extensive range of clubs, activities and excursions. Leaders and staff have constructed a well-considered offer, designed to broaden pupils' knowledge and experience of the world around them. This enhances their understanding of the subjects they study, for example through theatre trips and visits to Malaysia and Berlin. Many pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), participate in this rich provision. Pupils take part in clubs, such as gardening and multi-gym. Pupils develop leadership skills through many opportunities to lead in different areas of the school, such as the student leadership council and the team of trained anti-bullying ambassadors. They are positive about how these opportunities support their personal development and enjoyment of school.

The careers education programme is well structured, helping pupils to consider their next steps in detail. External visitors provide valuable information about further education, apprenticeships and the world of work. Pupils routinely visit places of higher education, such as universities, to broaden their understanding of future pathways.

Needs attention

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Overall, the rate of pupils' attendance is below the national average. Although leaders have secured some improvements, they acknowledge that attendance is still not where it should be. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is below what is typical nationally. The proportion of pupils who are absent on a regular basis has reduced overall, but it remains well above national figures. The school has introduced a range of strategies to encourage pupils to attend more regularly. For example, leaders hold frequent celebration and reward assemblies. They also work closely with the SEND team, safeguarding leads and the pastoral team to identify barriers to pupils' attendance and create bespoke approaches. However, it is too soon to determine the full impact of this work.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. At break and lunchtime, they interact socially in friendly and respectful ways. Pupils report that bullying is not an issue and that, if an incident were to occur, they are confident that staff would resolve it swiftly and appropriately. Trained anti-bullying ambassadors provide valuable peer support.

Although there has only been one permanent exclusion for the past two years, the number of pupils who have been suspended is significantly above the national figure. Despite some improvements, leaders acknowledge that this remains too high and have strengthened pastoral support for pupils at risk of suspension. However, it is too early to see the impact of this work.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils are typically positive about their academic and social experiences at Isca Academy. They value their teachers for both their subject expertise and the caring, supportive relationships they build with them. Pupils report that if they have a problem, a trusted adult will help them to resolve it. Pupils appreciate the precise and well-considered support for their emotional wellbeing and mental health. They can seek help from a range of sources, including trained mental health ambassadors and specialist practitioners. Pupils who find the noise and busyness of break and lunchtime challenging can access the quiet area where they can build friendships and engage in calming activities, such as reading. This provision helps pupils to feel settled and supported.

Pupils have high aspirations. They typically achieve close to national averages in almost all subjects, including core areas such as English, mathematics and science. Pupils who face additional barriers to their learning, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), also achieve well. Pupils work hard and generally take pride in their learning. They enjoy the wide range of subjects offered through the broad and balanced curriculum.

The school identifies the needs of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND quickly to ensure that appropriate support is put in place. For example, pupils who struggle to read receive help through a range of strategies, including a phonics programme. As a result, these pupils make swift progress in their reading.

All pupils have access to an impressive range of clubs, activities and excursions. Many pupils take part in multiple opportunities that extend their learning and interests. For example, pupils visit locations such as the Mount Vesuvius region in Italy to enhance their understanding of physical geography.

Pupils behave well both in lessons and around the school site. However, the proportion of pupils who receive suspensions remains high. Although leaders have improved pupils' attendance, too many pupils still miss school.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment information effectively to identify and address gaps and misconceptions in some pupils' knowledge.
 - Leaders should ensure that all pupils develop secure foundational knowledge and skills in writing across the curriculum.
 - Leaders should develop and sustain effective systems to ensure high attendance for all.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff embed the behaviour policy with greater consistency so that fewer pupils are suspended for fixed periods from school.
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About this inspection

This school is part of the Ted Wragg Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Moira Marder, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrew Mulcock.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Inspectors spoke with school leaders, teachers, trust leaders, trustees and local governors during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school uses nine alternative provisions, including one that is unregistered.

Headteacher: Vicki Joyce

Lead inspector:

Susan Aykin, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Mark Burgess, Ofsted Inspector

Marie Thomas, His Majesty's Inspector

Chris Walker, Ofsted Inspector

Jo Guest, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from [different sources](#). More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

 The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 7 July 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

914

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

950

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

27.90%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

4.16%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

14.33%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English indices of deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	46.8%	45.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	44.2%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	52.8%	45.3%	Close to average

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	46.4	46.1	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	44.0	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	48.9	46.3	Close to average

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.04	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	0.23	-0.03	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	25.0%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	27.3%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	25.5%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	30.4	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	33.4	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	36.8	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.46	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.87	-0.57	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	25.0%	53.1%	-28.1 pp
2023/24 (final)	27.3%	53.1%	-25.9 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	25.5%	52.4%	-26.9 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	30.4	50.4	-20.0
2023/24 (final)	33.4	50.0	-16.6
2022/23 (final)	36.8	50.3	-13.5

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.46	0.16	-0.63
2022/23 (final)	-0.87	0.17	-1.03

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (revised)	90%	92%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	88%	93%	Below
2021 leavers (revised)	92%	94%	Average

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	11.0%	8.4%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	13.4%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	13.4%	9.0%	Above

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	27.4%	23.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	31.8%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	35.2%	26.5%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional 

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard ●

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard ●

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention ●

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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