

Inspection of a good school: Swindon Academy

Beech Avenue, Swindon, Wiltshire SN2 1JR

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 June 2022

Outcome

Swindon Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Staff and pupils understand the reasons behind the school's rules and values. Most strive to follow them.

Warm, caring relationships are at the heart of the way that staff work with pupils. All pupils have some staff who know them well. House captains and prefects are role models for their peers.

Children in the early years talk with enthusiasm about what they do at school. Pupils in both the primary and secondary phases are courteous and confident. Most say that if bullying happens, staff deal with it promptly.

Behaviour in lessons is good. Clear routines mean that pupils can focus on learning. Children in the early years and younger pupils learn how to socialise. Staff support them to use the exciting range of play equipment and games available. Sixth-form students have a supportive environment that enables them to learn well and develop independence.

The curriculum helps pupils to learn about equality, diversity, tolerance and respect. Events such as recent platinum jubilee celebrations reinforce what they learn.

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

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils of all ages learn a wide range of subjects and can remember what they have learned. Staff appreciate the training that leaders provide. It helps them continue to develop their knowledge and skills. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They present new learning clearly and correct pupils' misconceptions if they occur. Leaders review the curriculum and improve it where needed.

Reading is a high priority throughout the school. Children in the early years develop their

language skills. They become familiar with some letter sounds in preparation for reading. Younger pupils learn to read using books that are well matched to the phonics they know. They are excited about the stories that staff read to them. Older pupils read a wide range of thoughtfully selected texts. These develop their understanding of equality and diversity, as well as their reading skills and vocabulary. Pupils can talk confidently about the books that they have read. At all stages, those who have fallen behind with their reading get the support they need to catch up.

The mathematics curriculum is ambitious. Leaders have considered how to ensure that pupils remember what they have learned. This means they can build on what they already know. In the primary phase, the links to prior learning are not always as clear as they are at secondary level. Activities for children in the early years develop their understanding of concepts such as number.

Teachers check appropriately on what pupils have learned. Consequently, staff identify gaps in knowledge quickly and close them. In the early years, staff have a precise understanding of what children know already and what they need to learn next.

Leaders are committed to making sure that all pupils, including those with SEND, are included in all aspects of school life. For example, they have worked with pupils with SEND to make sure that they can attend clubs that meet their needs and interests. However, the needs of some pupils with SEND are not always met in all areas of the curriculum. As a result, some have gaps in their learning. The needs of pupils who have an education, health and care plan are well understood by staff. They get the support they need to access the same curriculum as their peers.

Most pupils have positive attitudes toward their learning. They take seriously the school expectations that they work hard, take responsibility and are kind. The atmosphere is calm and purposeful. Disruption to learning does not happen often.

The wider personal development of pupils is a significant strength of the school. Pupils of all ages take on responsibilities in roles such as house captains, prefects, table monitors and school council members. All pupils are expected to take part in activities that will develop their character, leadership and interests. Pupils learn about those from different backgrounds. They know about the importance of mutual respect and tolerance. Secondary-age pupils get the information they need about careers, apprenticeships and further education. The numbers going on to university courses and apprenticeships have increased significantly.

Leaders have a clear vision for the school. They have thought carefully about how to achieve this vision and review their actions towards it. The trust and governors know the school well and provide both support and challenge. However, a relatively large proportion of the few parents who gave their views about the school were unhappy with the way that staff communicated with them when they had a concern.

Staff have confidence in leaders. Their views are sought and any concerns about workload and well-being are acted on. Most staff feel that leaders consider their workload and reduce it where they can.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of keeping pupils safe. Staff know how to spot signs that a pupil may be at risk. They understand what to do if they have any concerns. Leaders have effective systems for monitoring concerns that are reported to them. They involve other agencies promptly when required.

The curriculum develops pupils' understanding of risk at an age-appropriate level. Older pupils learn about online safety and how to recognise the signs they may be being exploited.

Checks are made to ensure the suitability of staff to work at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils with SEND do not always receive enough support with their learning. This means that some have gaps in their knowledge. Leaders should make sure that all pupils with SEND get the help they need to make the best possible progress.
- Relatively few parents gave their views of the school during the inspection. However, of those who did, some are dissatisfied with the way that school leaders deal with concerns. Some parents do not have confidence that the issues they raise will be resolved. Leaders need to improve communication with parents so that they know that their concerns have been dealt with.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2017.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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

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| Unique reference number | 135364 |
| Local authority | Swindon |
| Inspection number | 10228402 |
| Type of school | All-through |
| School category | Academy sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1,927 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 102 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Yasmine Bevan |
| Principal | Ruth Robinson |
| Website | www.swindon-academy.org |
| Date of previous inspection | 24 and 25 May 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school uses two alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- 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.
- Inspectors met with the executive principal, headteachers, senior leaders, trustees, governors and staff from the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, early reading and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- An inspector also listened to pupils in Years 1 and 3 read to members of school staff.
- Inspectors also visited lessons in other subjects, including history and geography.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead, examined school records and discussed safeguarding cases.
- Inspectors met with the three special educational needs coordinators.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the views of staff in Ofsted's online survey. No pupils completed the online survey so inspectors undertook additional activities to seek their views.
- Inspectors visited school sites at Beech Avenue and Alton Close.

Inspection team

Sarah Favager-Dalton, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kelly Olive

Her Majesty's Inspector

Marcia Northeast

Ofsted Inspector

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