

The Jam Academy

Jam Theatre Studios, 45a West Street, Marlow, Buckinghamshire SL7 2LS

Inspection dates

28–30 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Sixth form provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The joint proprietor-leaders have developed a culture of high aspiration and ambition. This is shared by all involved with the school. A sense of purpose and respect permeates the school.
- Leaders and teachers know their pupils very well. Strong, trusting relationships underpin a nurturing learning environment. Work to promote pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding.
- Students in the sixth form make outstanding progress due to excellent teaching and exceptional pastoral support. Consequently, they succeed in their chosen pathways.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They learn to promote fundamental British values, including demonstrating tolerance and respect for all.
- Monitoring of the academic progress of pupils in Jam Creative School is not precise enough to allow teachers to ensure that pupils are routinely challenged to make more rapid progress.
- Pupils display a love of learning due to the excellent pastoral care systems and motivating curriculum. They are supported exceptionally well in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Teachers provide stimulating and creative opportunities for pupils to learn. Pupils in Jam Creative School make good progress with their academic and pastoral development.
- Pupils feel safe and learn how to keep themselves safe. Pupils' attendance reflects their positive attitudes. Most rarely miss a day of school.
- Parents describe the school as 'fabulous' and 'amazing'.
- Leaders' self-evaluation is not systematic enough to identify the priorities for school development.
- The joint proprietor-leaders have ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards but they do not have an in-depth knowledge of them.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders have a sharper understanding of the independent school standards and routinely review how they meet them
 - systematically evaluating the work of leaders and identifying priorities for development
 - developing a more precise method to monitor and track the progress of pupils in Jam Creative School and using this information to make sure that pupils make the best possible progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - providing greater challenge so that pupils are able to move on swiftly when they have grasped a concept.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have established an ambitious vision for Jam Creative School that aims to deliver education 'in a creative way for creative students'. Leaders are very clear that this part of the school is not a performing arts school even though it runs alongside The Jam Academy specialist sixth form for performance and production arts. The sixth form aims to produce 'confident, well rounded graduates with mature attitudes who are multi-skilled and have huge potential to work in the industry'.
- Underpinning their vision, school leaders have created a strong culture of respect throughout the school. Pupils who have not always had positive previous experiences of school develop and display respect and trust for their peers and staff. As a consequence of the strong value system evident throughout the school, pupils develop a love of learning and have high aspirations. Many pupils and parents speak of the way that Jam has 'transformed' their lives. They identify the strong school leadership as at the root of this.
- Leaders have designed a broad and balanced curriculum for Jam Creative School that promotes pastoral and academic learning as equally important. 'Skills' lessons effectively address English and mathematics and pupils then apply these skills through cross-curricular projects. These are built on pupils' interests and prior learning. For example, pupils excitedly and very comprehensively explained to me how to make bioplastic and why it was important to reduce plastic usage.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through the curriculum projects and associated visits. Pupils enjoy the very wide range of activities, from performing arts to sports and residential trips as well as visits to the theatre. All pupils learn to play the guitar and explore different languages and cultures with visiting teachers.
- 'Soul food' lessons support pupils' emotional and mental health development exceptionally well. They also promote fundamental British values such as tolerance as they help pupils to explore different views and beliefs. Pupils develop very good communication and personal skills through these lessons, and are well prepared for their next steps and future life in modern Britain.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and learning in the school. Visiting specialist teachers are observed regularly, and said that they find the feedback and discussions about pupils' learning useful and developmental. Staff are clear that they have to meet the high standards established by the school leaders.
- Leaders evaluate the work of the school, but currently this is not systematic enough to identify the priorities for development. Leaders have many creative plans for school improvement, but these need to be linked to sharply focused evaluation.
- Leaders track pupils' progress closely, especially in The Jam Academy. However, they are aware that monitoring of the academic progress of pupils in Jam Creative School needs to be more precise so that pupils are challenged to make more rapid progress in areas where they are stronger.

Governance

- The school does not have a governing body. The school leaders are the joint proprietors.
- The school leaders are passionate about the school and the difference that they believe it can make for the pupils in their care.
- In order to ensure accountability, leaders routinely survey parents about aspects of the school's work. They publish these replies along with leaders' responses and planned actions. Parents are very positive about this approach. All parents who spoke with the inspector and/or replied to the Parent View survey agreed that the school is well led and managed and that the school responds well to any of their concerns.
- Leaders have also looked beyond the parent body in order to moderate and validate their work. For example, they have built strong links with local schools and routinely swap work for moderation to check that assessments are accurate.
- Leaders have ensured that the independent school standards are met. However, they do not yet routinely review how they meet these standards, and any future revisions of them, to ensure that they will always be met.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have created a safe environment where pupils feel safe and develop strong self-esteem. This enables pupils to focus on their learning and make good progress. Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe effectively.
- Parents are confident that the school keeps their children safe. Many remarked on how much happier their children are compared to previous school experiences, especially with regard to their emotional well-being and mental health.
- Staff know pupils very well. Leaders make sure that staff are fully trained so that they are alert for any changes in pupils' behaviour or attitudes. Leaders evaluate safeguarding procedures regularly, making changes to ensure that they are clear to follow and fully support pupils' safety. Communication is good, and staff report any concerns quickly.
- The safeguarding policy is up to date and published on the school's website. It is in line with current guidance. All relevant checks to ensure that adults are suitable to work with children are in place. The single central record meets requirements. Leaders implement robust risk assessments for all aspects of health and safety, and ensure the security of the premises.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have established school as a safe place where pupils can show that they enjoy learning. There is purpose to lessons, and pupils feel confident to take risks because they know that it does not matter if they get things wrong as long as they have tried. As a consequence, pupils engage very well with the learning activities, and they challenge themselves to try work that might seem tricky to start with.
- Teachers work effectively to identify 'learning gaps' and to 'fill the cracks' in pupils' prior learning. For example, in mathematics the teacher identified mental multiplication as an

area for improvement. Pupils said that they had increased their confidence and abilities with this since they had started every mathematics lesson with quick multiplication challenges.

- The ongoing verbal feedback from teachers to pupils successfully helps pupils to identify aspects of work that they can improve on and how to make these improvements. Peer assessment is also used very effectively, and pupils understand the need to explain and communicate clearly.
- Teaching is creative, and pupils enjoy the integrated nature of their learning. They like using their learning through application of their skills. For example, one pupil explained how he had used his mathematics when creating a budget to cost his textiles project. Another pupil explained how the moisture probe she had made would help them to successfully grow vegetables on the school allotment.
- While the school policy is that homework is optional, parents report that their children are so engaged with their learning that they do this voluntary homework. Pupils say that they enjoy the learning and want to continue with it.
- Teachers provide comprehensive and detailed written information for parents. Staff work very closely and successfully with parents to ensure that individual pupils' needs are met swiftly and effectively. Parents are overwhelming in their praise for the school. All who contributed to Parent View said they would recommend the school. Typical comments include: 'This is an amazing school; they care for and nurture the individual needs of the children.' Another example describes pupils 'growing academically but especially as human beings as a result of the superb education they receive'.
- Teachers have built very strong, respectful relationships with pupils. They have a good knowledge of pupils' interests and abilities, and plan activities that capture their interests well and generally meet their learning needs. However, teachers' focus on each individual has not been developed into a clear system for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress across the curriculum.
- Pupils learn to sustain and develop their work. For example, pupils' writing shows good progress with control of structure and flow. However, despite the focus on learning the basics of punctuation, some pupils continue to repeat the same errors.
- Pupils enjoy learning together, supporting each other and working as a team to make sure that no one is left behind. However, this means that sometimes pupils can work at a pace that is too slow for them and therefore do not make the rapid progress of which they are capable.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils thrive due to the exceptionally caring and respectful relationships displayed by all members of the Jam community. Pupils know that they are part of a world where everyone supports each other to grow emotionally, socially and academically.
- Honest and respectful communication is expected from all. Pupils are taught to listen to each other's ideas and to carefully explain their own thoughts and feelings about a topic

or situation. As a consequence, pupils have developed excellent personal communication skills and feel safe to share their opinions. This approach has also strengthened pupils' abilities to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations because they have a keen understanding of how people should behave and interact.

- Pupils are well versed in keeping themselves safe in different situations, including online. They have the skills to navigate the internet safely, and are discerning readers, for example when evaluating news websites.
- 'Soul food' lessons provide the foundation for all personal, social, emotional and well-being development. These exceptionally successful lessons form a rich base from which pupils build strong self-esteem and develop a love of learning. Many pupils, especially those who had previously negative experiences of school, identified these sessions as the key to their pastoral and academic success.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Leaders have established a very strong culture of pastoral care where communication and safeguarding underpin the very high expectations of behaviour. Pupils feel safe and valued. They take pride in their excellent behaviour, self-moderating appropriately.
- Pupils meet the high expectations for behaviour consistently. They are articulate and thoughtful, welcoming to visitors and keen to discuss their learning, progress and ambitions.
- Pupils are adamant that there is no bullying at the school. They told me that this is because they have the space and time in 'soul food' lessons to discuss their feelings. They told me it is healthy to talk about thoughts and feelings if they are ever upset or worried about anyone or anything.
- Pupils are very proud to be part of Jam. They enjoy learning and are proud of the progress they are making. Their attendance is exceptionally high because they do not want to miss school. For example, a parent told me that their child asked why they couldn't also go to school on Sundays. Pupils who had previously low attendance at different providers now rarely miss a day of school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Many pupils join Jam Creative School following a period of turbulence with their education. Pupils make very good pastoral and academic progress from their varied starting points. They develop exceptionally positive attitudes to learning that support good progress in English, mathematics and a wide range of additional subjects.
- Pupils in Jam Creative School have not yet taken external examinations. However, scrutiny of their work and the school's performance monitoring information shows that current pupils are making good progress over time. For example, pupils' history essays demonstrate secure knowledge and understanding of the topics studied. They also show that most pupils make good progress with writing and vocabulary.
- Pupils in the sixth form make exceptional progress from their starting points, attaining

highly across the curriculum.

- Pupils and parents are very positive about the progress pupils make, often comparing it very favourably to experiences in previous schools. A typical comment from a pupil was: 'I learn more in a week at Jam than I did in a year at my last school.' Comments from parents were similar, for example, one describing how pupils are 'flying in most subjects and learning about themselves as well as learning content'.
- Pupils develop their employability skills very well. They learn how to work as a member of a team and how to discuss their emotions and perceptions with others in order to work more effectively together. They are skilled at taking into account other people's views and gathering a range of evidence before coming to a view about a topic themselves.
- Pupils value the pastoral support that has rapidly increased their self-esteem and helped them to build positive attitudes to learning. Pupils provide exceptional support for each other, celebrating successes and helping with struggles. However, some pupils are not making the more rapid academic progress of which they are capable because they wait for others in the class to catch up before they move on.

Sixth form provision

Outstanding

- The Jam Academy provides high-quality specialist teaching for the performing and production arts. This is combined with impressive pastoral care that ensures that students are very well prepared for successful futures. The high expectations established by school leaders set the benchmark for all visiting specialist teachers. As a consequence, students' vocational and pastoral outcomes are impressive.
- Students make rapid progress with their vocational and pastoral learning. They perform very highly in external examinations. All make rapid progress from their starting points and attain highly. A very high proportion attain distinction star grades in their level 3 BTEC National Diploma qualifications. Retention rates are excellent and all students complete their courses successfully.
- Leaders provide exceptional support for students as they decide on their next steps. Careers advice and guidance is impartial and expert, with industry professionals visiting to share experiences. Leaders are aware that not all students will want to continue in the performing and production arts, and they also provide very well for these. All students who progressed to higher study are successfully completing their courses, indicating leaders' success in helping them find the right pathway.
- Programmes of study are planned carefully and with expert knowledge and understanding of students' needs and the industry they aim to join. Specialist teachers are employed to ensure that students have the highest-quality training, for example in voice, ballet, tap and acting. This industry-specific learning is balanced with lessons that successfully develop students' enterprise skills and personal learning. For example, finance and business lessons ensure that pupils are well equipped for the world of work. Students appreciate this breadth of learning, one student proudly telling me that she knew how to budget and pay her taxes.
- Teaching and learning is outstanding and students make exceptional progress. Feedback is precise and promotes progress. For example, in a tap lesson students were given individual movements to practise in order to improve their fluency with a longer

sequence. This was highly successful and supported students to understand the required movements and rapidly improve their skills.

- Students greatly value the 'soul food' lessons that are the cornerstone of the curriculum. Students have an impressive understanding of how they should and can positively contribute to ensuring equality, and fundamental British values are promoted in modern Britain. For example, a discussion about how students could react when confronted with those less fortunate than themselves, such as those who are homeless or experiencing mental health problems, was frank and open. It supported students very well in exploring their role in society and the options available for supporting others.
- Safeguarding is promoted as key to all learning throughout the sixth form. Students are taught to keep themselves healthy and fit, looking after themselves physically and emotionally. They are also taught to keep themselves safe in the wider world. There is honesty about the potential dangers of the industry they aspire to join and students are confident about how to keep themselves safe.
- Students and parents are exceptionally positive about sixth-form provision and recommend it without reservation.
- Leaders have ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards related to post-16 provision.

School details

Unique reference number	142660
DfE registration number	825/6047
Inspection number	10039169

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	10 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	20
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	9
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Jo Noel-Hartley and Mark Hartley
Chair	Not applicable
Principal	Jo Noel-Hartley
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,800–9,600
Telephone number	01628 483 808
Website	www.thejamacademy.co.uk
Email address	mark@jamtheatre.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Jam Academy comprises both the specialist performing and production arts sixth form, and the Jam Creative School, which provides education for pupils aged 10 to 16. The Jam Academy started in September 2012 and Jam Creative School in September 2015.
- The school was registered by the Department for Education in October 2016. This is its

first standard inspection.

- The Jam Theatre Company provides after-school and holiday workshops and training on the school site. It is not part of the school and so did not form part of this inspection.
- The proprietors, Jo Noel-Hartley and Mark Hartley, are also the school leaders and the only full-time members of staff.
- There is no governing body.
- The school is registered as an independent coeducational school for boys and girls aged 10 to 18. There are currently 20 pupils on roll, aged from 12 upwards.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is average. The proportion of pupils with education, health and care plans is well below the national average.
- There are no disadvantaged pupils at the school.
- The school makes use of specialist facilities at a local school, Sir William Borlase's Grammar School, along with local authority sports provision. There is also a school allotment situated within walking distance of the main site. The school uses no alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in a range of Jam Academy and Jam Creative School classes. She also carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work, including looking at video evidence of pupils' performances.
- Meetings were held with the school leaders.
- The inspector spoke with all pupils at the school, a group of parents and two visiting members of staff.
- The views of parents were also considered through the 11 responses to the Parent View online survey and the free-text responses. The inspector also considered parents' responses to the school's own surveys.
- The inspector held telephone conversations with a representative from the local authority and a leader at Sir William Borlase's Grammar School. The inspector also visited the school's off-site allotment.
- There were no responses to the staff questionnaire.
- A range of documents was looked at, including the school's own evaluation of its work, curriculum plans, schemes of work and records of pupils' achievement.
- Information about safeguarding arrangements was checked, as were the single central record, risk assessments and a range of policies.
- All the education independent school standards were checked during this inspection.

Inspection team

Lucy English, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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