

Inspection of The Ferrers School

Queensway, Higham Ferrers, Rushden, Northamptonshire NN10 8LF

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 July 2021

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

The Ferrers School is a welcoming and inclusive school. Pupils say that they are happy to attend the school. They feel safe. Pupils recognise that they are well looked after, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Relationships between pupils and with staff are positive. Pupils know that the quality of education in school is getting better all the time. Many parents and carers recognise this too. Sixth-form students enjoy their studies on the school site.

Pupils, and students in the sixth form, are achieving better than they did before because the quality of education has improved. In most subjects, expectations are high and pupils understand what they need to know and be able to do at the right time. However, in a small number of subjects, pupils do not achieve as well as they could. In these subjects, such as digital information technology and business studies, the planning and delivery of the curriculum do not enable pupils to reach their potential.

There are many polite and courteous pupils in the school. Pupils' conduct is calm and orderly, in lessons and at social times. However, some pupils could be more punctual to the start of their lessons. Pupils say that they have either not experienced any bullying or that they are confident that any issues will get sorted quickly. The school environment is well maintained.

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

Leaders and governors have established a positive school culture. Their clear vision has united staff. Members of the academy council play an active role in ensuring that the school's vision is realised. The school is well supported by the trust. Leaders are mindful of the workload of staff. Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, leaders have kept their focus on the things that will improve the school. Leaders have also ensured that all staff receive high-quality professional development. Staff say that they strongly value these opportunities. Staff morale is high. Most parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's survey would recommend the school. Parents typically describe the support provided by leaders and staff during the pandemic as 'exceptional'.

The curriculum is ambitious. Pupils study a broad range of subjects, particularly at key stage 4. The subjects that make up the English baccalaureate lie at the heart of the curriculum. The proportion of pupils studying a modern foreign language has risen rapidly over the past two years.

Most curriculum leaders have thought carefully about what is taught and when, including in the sixth form. They have devised effective systems for assessing pupils' understanding. Pupils' achievement has strengthened, especially in subjects such as English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and expressive arts. Students are achieving similarly well in the sixth form, particularly in English, history and

mathematics. However, the curriculum is not as ambitious in a small number of subjects. In these subjects, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not consistently high enough.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. Most present this clearly so that pupils know and remember more. Teachers check pupils' understanding and clear up misconceptions. In some subjects, pupils sometimes receive too much information in one go. Pupils find it difficult to remember new knowledge when this occurs.

The curriculum for personal development is strong across all key stages. Pupils value the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities on offer during the school's '6th session'. These opportunities include sports and expressive arts clubs, for example. The school's 'PLEDGE' programme ensures that the curriculum promotes pupils' contributions to a positive society. Pupils learn about equality of opportunity and diversity. A group for lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils has recently started as pupils wanted to contribute to education about equality. Pupils receive a high-quality curriculum about how they can keep themselves safe from harm. This includes learning about online safety and healthy relationships.

Leaders ensure that pupils receive impartial careers advice. Students in the sixth form are supported effectively with their next steps in employment, training and higher or further education.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. Leaders' oversight of pupils with SEND or who are disadvantaged has transformed rapidly. The coordinator for SEND has restored the confidence and trust of parents. Pupils benefit from a dedicated space, the Chichele suite, where they receive close support from adults. Staff work effectively with external agencies to ensure that pupils receive the support they need. All pupils with SEND study as much of the school's full curriculum as possible.

Leaders emphasise a love of reading through schemes like 'book buzz' for pupils in key stage 3. Close support is provided for pupils who need extra help with reading. Leaders have introduced a phonics programme to help these pupils become more confident and fluent with their reading ability.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. They work hard to make sure that all pupils attend regularly. Attendance in the sixth form has improved significantly. Leaders reinforce their expectations regularly. Exclusions are used appropriately.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have transformed the school's arrangements for safeguarding. They have established a strong culture of vigilance. Staff are well trained and understand the school's systems for reporting concerns. Leaders are vigilant and tenacious in ensuring that the school's most vulnerable pupils receive the help and support that

they need. They work well with external agencies. Leaders' record-keeping is detailed, including the personal education plans for children looked after and care leavers.

Leaders and governors make the appropriate checks when appointing new staff. Leaders act swiftly to protect pupils, including when concerns arise about the conduct of adults.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have improved curriculum plans across the majority of subjects to help pupils know and remember more. The curriculum is not delivered fully effectively in a smaller number of subjects. In these subjects, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough, for example in computing and information technology. Leaders should ensure that the intent and implementation of the curriculum are equally ambitious for all pupils in all subjects.
- Sometimes, pupils receive work which is not well matched to the aims of the curriculum, despite carefully planned sequences of learning. Teachers should ensure that pupils' understanding of concepts and ideas is secure before moving on to the next stage of learning, so that they remember more of what is taught.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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 [here](#).

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

Unique reference number	139988
Local authority	North Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10184542
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	967
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	122
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Shirley Jamieson
Principal	Angela Smith
Website	http://www.theferrers.org
Date of previous inspection	4 March 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust, which it joined in February 2019.
- The school's sixth-form curriculum is delivered as part of a consortium arrangement with two other local schools: Huxlow Science College and the Rushden Academy. The partnership is known as The East Northamptonshire College (TENC).
- The school uses three alternative education providers for a very small number of pupils. They are all based in the local area. Two of these providers are unregistered.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

- We met with the principal and other members of the senior leadership team. Meetings were also held with leaders for the sixth form, careers education and the provision for pupils with SEND.
- In order to check the school's arrangements for safeguarding, the lead inspector met with the school's designated leaders for safeguarding and for children looked after. The designated leader for safeguarding also has oversight of pupils attending off-site alternative provision. Policies, procedures and record-keeping were evaluated. This included a review of the school's single central register and the school's processes for recruiting staff.
- A meeting was held with representatives of the school's local academy council, including the chair. A meeting was also held with a representative from the trust who has a strategic oversight of the school.
- We met with several groups of pupils, including students in the sixth form. We also spoke to pupils informally around the school site.
- The lead inspector considered the 98 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, including 55 free-text responses. The 83 responses to the Ofsted's staff survey were also considered.
- The subjects that were considered in depth as part of this inspection were English, science, history and modern foreign languages. In each subject, we visited lessons, scrutinised the work in pupils' books and held discussions with subject leaders, teachers and pupils.

Inspection team

Chris Stevens, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Rakesh Patel	Her Majesty's Inspector
Vondra Mays	Ofsted Inspector
Ellenor Beighton	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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