

# Inspection of Fitzwaryn School

Denchworth Road, Wantage, Oxfordshire OX12 9ET

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Inspection dates: 18 and 19 May 2022

| <b>Overall effectiveness</b> | <b>Outstanding</b> |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| The quality of education     | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Behaviour and attitudes      | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Personal development         | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Leadership and management    | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Sixth-form provision         | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Previous inspection grade    | Outstanding        |

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Fitzwaryn School is a joyful place to learn. From when they join as young children, right through to when they leave as young adults, staff make sure that pupils are known, understood, nurtured and kept very safe. Pupils and parents told us how much they love the school.

Leaders are highly ambitious for pupils. Their attention to detail ensures that the school's vision of 'through learning to learn, pupils will access society' is achieved. Pupils learn to understand themselves and develop their independence. They proudly participate in several sporting events with other schools. Pupils were keen to tell us about the Shakespeare play they were producing. They had made the backdrops and were now learning their lines. Students in the sixth form talked enthusiastically about the trips they help to plan, such as to Parliament and the theatre.

Staff are expert at meeting pupils' different needs. They manage pupils' behaviour especially well. Staff know just what to do to help pupils understand their emotions. They teach pupils how to communicate positively about how they are feeling. Consequently, pupils' behaviour is superb, and they learn very well. Pupils rarely fall out but if they do, adults sort things out quickly.

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

Leaders and governors are clear that the purpose of the school's curriculum is to help pupils gain the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in their future lives. Leaders and staff use their comprehensive knowledge about each pupil's special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to make sure that the quality of education that pupils receive is exceptional. Governors' strategic oversight contributes strongly to the school's ongoing success.

Leaders expertly set out what they want pupils to achieve at each stage of their education. Staff expertly break down these end points into very small steps. They constantly assess what pupils know and understand. This means they know just when to take the next step. Adults know that they may need to repeat and revisit each step in learning several times before learning is really embedded. This is especially the case when teaching pupils to read.

Staff make skilful use of pupils' education, health and care plan when planning what pupils need to learn and how best to teach things. Staff adapt how they teach to suit each child. They make activities fun and often practical. They encourage pupils to recognise that everything they learn will help them to be as independent as possible in the future. For example, in mathematics, pupils learned about money and then used their knowledge during a visit to a supermarket.

Leaders make sure pupils develop a love of reading. Adults read high-quality books to pupils. These are carefully chosen to reflect a range of life experiences and

inspirational people, especially characters with SEND. Pupils love to listen to these stories and use them as inspiration for their play or their writing. Older pupils enjoy reading magazines in their spare time.

Adults are extremely well trained in communication methods and skills. They teach pupils to communicate in a way that works best for each individual. For example, some pupils learn to use electronic communication aides and some use sign language. Other pupils who lack confidence in using words are gently encouraged. One parent proudly explained how important this has been in helping her child interact with the world, 'My child joined with limited speech and can now order a drink at a café.'

Many pupils' ability to interact with others was negatively affected by being isolated during the pandemic. Consequently, leaders especially prioritise teaching social skills. For some, this starts with learning how to tolerate being in a noisy room. Other pupils learn how to be polite and how to give a compliment. Adults' detailed understanding of the importance of communication adds to the real sense of community in the school.

Students in the sixth form are exceptionally well prepared for their next stages. Careers advice and work experience help them to plan for their futures. Students enjoy learning about the workplace. For example, they source, make and sell hanging baskets. Students are interested in the world. They raise money for charities and campaign for local issues. Typically, all the pupils who leave the school go to college to continue their studies.

Adults feel well supported in managing their workloads. Teaching assistants especially value the professional training that enables them to be highly effective and integral members of the school team. Parents are full of praise for the school. As one said, 'It does not get any better than the team at Fitzwaryn. They have been integral to the progress that my child is making.'

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff are vigilant about keeping pupils safe. Staff constantly update their safeguarding knowledge so they know the signs to look out for that may mean a pupil is at risk of harm. Staff report and record any concerns promptly. Leaders work tirelessly with external partners to get pupils and their families any additional help they need to keep pupils safe.

Staff provide pupils with carefully tailored education about how to keep themselves safe in the community and when using social media. For example, pupils learn how to cross roads safely and how to use public transport.

## 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

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Unique reference number</b>                    | 139322   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                            | Oxfordshire  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                          | 10210896   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                             | Special  |
| <b>School category</b>                            | Academy special converter  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                        | 3 to 19  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                           | Mixed  |
| <b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>        | 114  |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b> | 16   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>                      | Board of trustees  |
| <b>Chair of trust</b>                             | Jane Edwards   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                                | Stephanie Coneboy  |
| <b>Website</b>                                    | <a href="http://www.fitzwaryn.oxon.sch.uk">www.fitzwaryn.oxon.sch.uk</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>                | 12 March 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005                 |

## Information about this school

- Fitzwaryn School is part of The Propeller Academy Trust.
- The school caters for pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties. Several pupils have autism spectrum disorder. A few pupils have profound and multiple learning disabilities.
- Most pupils are placed in the school by Oxfordshire local authority. A few pupils are placed in the school by other local authorities. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school has a very small number of pupils in the early years foundation stage. Their experiences have been taken into account when making judgements about the school as a whole.
- Pupils in the sixth form learn in the 'student centre', which is on the same site as the main school.

- The school currently uses no alternative provision.
- The school runs a holiday club for pupils who attend the school. The local authority funds 20 days of holiday activities a year.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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 headteacher, the deputy headteachers, the chair of the trust, the chief executive officer of the trust, the chair of governors and another governor. Inspectors also met with a range of curriculum leaders.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in reading, mathematics and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, talked to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about some other subjects and saw pupils learning in these subjects.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors discussed pupils' behaviour and safety with leaders and staff. They observed the everyday work of the school. Inspectors checked a range of safeguarding and behaviour records. They checked the single central record of employment checks.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff and parents by checking responses to the Ofsted surveys. Inspectors met with some pupils and staff. Inspectors also communicated with members of the Oxfordshire local authority.

## Inspection team

Catherine Old, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Claire Prince

Ofsted Inspector

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