

Inspection of Samuel Ryder Academy

Drakes Drive, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL1 5AR

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 June 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Good
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy their time at Samuel Ryder Academy. The school is a great place for pupils to learn and develop into confident, well-rounded individuals. Pupils, of all ages, appreciate the unique nature of being part of an all-through school.

From young children to older students, everyone looks out for each other. The academy is a 'one school' family. Pupils, of all ages, trust staff to look after them. Lessons are calm, with pupils focused on their learning. In between lessons, pupils get on well with each other. Sixth-form students, for example, are excellent role models for younger children. If bullying or poor behaviour happens, it is dealt with quickly by staff. Rude or discriminatory language is not tolerated by anyone. Pupils are respectful of each other's differences. In this school, pupils can be themselves.

The school offers an exceptional set of trips, visits and experiences. From trips abroad to the school's sports academy, there is something for all pupils to do that is different or interesting. A high-quality careers programme supports pupils and students well. All pupils get clear, independent advice and guidance about a range of next steps. Pupils, including those in sixth form, are well prepared for life after they leave the school.

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

Leaders embrace the curriculum opportunities that an 'all-through' school offers. From early years to sixth form, there is an ambitious curriculum. Primary-aged pupils, for example, benefit from specialist subject teaching and secondary school facilities. Primary and secondary colleagues learn from each other's expertise. This enhances pupils' experiences across the school. Leaders' cross-school projects, such as a focus on oracy, support pupils to confidently talk about their learning.

All curriculum plans are well thought out. Key knowledge is ordered logically so pupils build their understanding as they move through the school. Detailed subject plans help teachers to design lessons that support pupils' learning.

In early years, the curriculum lays the foundations for a step up into Year 1. Further up the school, the sixth-form curriculum offers a range of courses and opportunities for students to really excel in their learning.

Across the school, staff access high-quality professional development. As a result, teachers have good subject knowledge. Many teachers use innovative and effective ways to check what pupils know and can do. In these instances, teachers spot where there are gaps in pupils' understanding. Pupils are then given clear advice on what to do. While much of the school's assessment is effective, there are times when some teachers do not use assessment well. When this happens, pupils do not get as helpful support to improve.

Leaders have ensured that reading, across all areas of the school, is a top priority. A wide range of books and texts enhance the curriculum. Pupils enjoy reading and being read to. There is high-quality support in both the primary and secondary provision for pupils who find reading difficult. Well-trained adults use an effective phonics programme to help pupils to quickly get better at reading.

Thoughtful academic and emotional support helps pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to succeed. Teachers use the information they have about pupils with SEND to ensure they access the same curriculum and achieve as well as their peers.

Leaders' personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum is an important part of the school's excellent approach to promoting pupils' personal development. Leaders link form time, assemblies and PSHE lessons closely together to provide a well-planned curriculum that develops pupils' character. This starts early in reception and continues into the sixth form. Pupils learn about a range of interesting and age-appropriate topics, which ready them for their place in society.

Leaders' high expectations of behaviour are shared by staff and pupils alike. Learning is rarely disrupted by off-task behaviour. Clear routines in early years support children to feel safe and secure. Pupils get high-quality support if they find it difficult to behave well. There is a fair and consistent approach to dealing with rewards and punishments. The focus on 'bully-free form groups' supports a growing positive culture across the school, where mutual respect is valued.

Leaders continually evaluate all aspects of their work to ensure what they do is making a difference to staff and pupils in the school. The school's values of 'achievement, care and excellent standards' underpin the work of leaders and staff. Governors and trustees check leaders' work and hold them firmly to account. Parents, staff and pupils overwhelmingly support leaders in their vision to create a high-performing, inclusive, all-through school. Leaders have been highly effective in creating this school with many strengths and notable areas of exceptional practice.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

A positive safeguarding culture is evident throughout all areas of the school. All staff are trained well to spot any concerns about pupils. Any issue, no matter how small, is recorded on the school's safeguarding system. This builds a clear picture of pupils' needs.

Detailed safeguarding records show prompt and effective actions to concerns about pupils. The school uses a range of early help and other agencies to ensure pupils, of all ages, get the help and support they need.

A highly effective PSHE curriculum teaches pupils well about risks to themselves. This includes a strong focus on how to keep safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all assessment is as effective as it could be. A small number of teachers are not using the school's assessment as intended. This means that some pupils do not always get, and some do not use, helpful information about their learning. Leaders need to ensure their assessment processes are well used and embedded across all areas of the school.

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

Unique reference number	138582
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10208872
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1383
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	120
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Martin Sidders
Headteacher	Matthew Gauthier
Website	www.samuelryderacademy.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	17 and 18 May 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Samuel Ryder Academy is an all-through school with primary and secondary provision based on one site.
- An acting headteacher is in place while the headteacher is on a period of absence.
- The school runs a before- and after-school club.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision for a small number of pupils.
- 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

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 and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, geography, mathematics, physical education, reading and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils about learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors viewed a range of curriculum plans and lessons in other subjects across all school phases.
- Inspectors looked closely at assessment in a range of subjects, including computer science and media studies.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector met with the school's safeguarding leaders. He looked closely at safeguarding systems, processes and records.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of pupils, from primary to sixth form, about safeguarding and behaviour.
- Inspectors met with a range of school leaders over both days of inspection, including the special educational needs coordinator.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with those responsible for governance.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with the chief executive officer of the trust.
- Inspectors considered the 201 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 197 free-text responses. Additionally, inspectors spoke to a number of parents on the telephone.
- Inspectors also considered the 86 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and 533 responses to Ofsted's online pupil view questionnaire.

Inspection team

Damian Loneragan, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Piercy	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Whear	Ofsted Inspector
Kristian Hewitt	Her Majesty's Inspector
Tessa Holledge	Her Majesty's Inspector

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