

Inspection of Princes Risborough School

Merton Road, Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire HP27 0DR

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 November 2022

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	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are motivated to achieve and to be successful. They are positive about their future aspirations and enjoy school. This is because leaders' high expectations for pupils are evident in many aspects of day-to-day life. The school is a calm, orderly place. In lessons, pupils are engaged and concentrate well. They benefit from teachers' high levels of expertise. Pupils appreciate the support they get from staff, which helps them to learn well. Staff look after pupils' well-being and safety. One pupil, reflecting the views of many, described the school as, 'a community where everyone is treated as an individual'.

Pupils learn to take responsibility for themselves and each other. Sixth-form students, for example, act as mentors to younger pupils. Other pupils are specially trained 'ambassadors' who support the mental health of their peers. There are opportunities for pupils to volunteer and to serve others, both in school and beyond, for example at a local food bank. Pupils respect each other and the adults with whom they work. Relationships are strong. This means that the majority of pupils are kind and considerate. However, when bullying happens or if pupils use any derogatory language, staff deal with this quickly and effectively.

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

Leaders, governors and trustees have an ambitious vision. This is having a clear impact in a wide range of ways because they work successfully to make this vision a reality. The curriculum is mostly very effective from Year 7 to the end of the sixth form. Pupils achieve strongly overall. They behave well and the school invests in their wider development. Students in the growing sixth form receive the right education and guidance to support them for their next steps beyond school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs identified accurately and early, including those in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND. Leaders rightly recognise that there are still aspects of the school that could improve further. For example, although leaders have successfully improved attendance rates, some pupils still miss school too often, including in the sixth form.

Pupils study a broad curriculum, acquiring much knowledge that they build on subsequently. Some subjects, such as English, are especially effective at supporting pupils' learning because the very well-designed curriculum is expertly taught in all key stages. Some other subjects are not quite at this level. The impact that teachers' checks on pupils' learning have on pupils' subsequent achievement is stronger in some subjects than in others. Students in the sixth form follow a wide range of courses. However, a relatively low proportion of pupils study the full suite of English Baccalaureate subjects in key stage 4. Although this is rising slowly, leaders have plans in place to address this.

The professional knowledge of staff is strong. Leaders prioritise developing the expertise of staff by providing high-quality training. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They also support pupils' reading in lessons, helping pupils to learn and

use appropriate subject-specific vocabulary. The needs of pupils with SEND are mostly met precisely because of teachers' careful adaptations, ensuring high expectations of pupils with SEND. Pupils who struggle with reading get the right help so that they can access learning fully.

Pupils value equality and diversity. While they appreciate the differences between people in society, their understanding of different religious faiths is uneven. Pupils know what underpins healthy relationships. They do not tolerate any discrimination or harassment and rightly trust staff to tackle any such issues very robustly. Pupils have a very wide range of good-quality opportunities for their personal development. Although this includes a high number of clubs covering the whole spectrum of pupils' interests, current participation rates are modest. Careers education, independent advice and guidance provide secure support for pupils' future choices. The ambitious reading programme means that pupils read 44 books from a wide range of cultures and periods by the end of Year 10. Although this is contributing to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, some pupils have not bought into it fully.

Trustees and governors are focused and knowledgeable. They evaluate the school's progress effectively. They know what the school is doing well and what needs to improve further. For example, while staff feel highly valued, governors and trustees are putting into place an even more robust process for managing staff workload. They also recognise that although the vast majority of parents and carers are highly supportive of the school, some parents feel that communication from the school is not effective enough.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Knowledgeable, well-trained staff make sure that any concerns about pupils are identified and referred to leaders promptly. Pupils get the support they need and leaders monitor pupils closely. Staff take swift and effective action if pupils raise concerns. Leaders liaise and communicate very well with external agencies when appropriate. Any allegations made about members of staff are handled appropriately. Leaders make all of the right checks on staff before they start work at the school. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in their relationships and when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all curriculum areas are as strong as the best. Pupils do not achieve as well as they could, therefore. In particular, the proportions of pupils achieving well in the full suite of English Baccalaureate subjects are relatively low. Leaders' high

ambitions for pupils' education, already evident in many aspects of the school, should be fully realised in practice.

- Some pupils miss too much school, including in the sixth form. Although improving because of leaders' actions to date, rates of persistent absence remain relatively high for these pupils. Leaders' continued work to tackle this issue needs to address it fully and effectively.

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.

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	146377
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10241583
Type of school	Secondary modern
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	1,022
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	129
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gaynor Bull
Headteacher	Simon Baker
Website	www.princesrisborough.bucks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of Insignis Academy Trust (IAT), a multi-academy trust. It opened as a school in IAT on 1 September 2018.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND who have autism spectrum disorder.
- The school currently uses three alternative providers.
- 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 graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school had 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, deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers and other leaders.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the board of trustees and one other trustee. He also met with representatives of the local governing body, including the chair.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of IAT.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, science, languages and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with the subject leader, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school was observed by the inspection team. Inspectors met with groups of pupils and spoke to a range of pupils both in and outside lessons. Inspectors also took into account pupils' responses to the Ofsted pupil survey.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of recruitment checks, talked to leaders responsible for safeguarding and looked at the school's safeguarding records and documents. Inspectors also talked to a range of staff and pupils about safeguarding.
- A range of the school's documentation was scrutinised, including leaders' evaluations of the effectiveness of the school, information about pupils' behaviour and attendance, and minutes of meetings of trustees and local governors.
- Inspectors met with members of staff to discuss the school's work. They considered responses to the confidential Ofsted staff survey. They also looked at parents' responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Matthew Haynes, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
James Rouse	Ofsted Inspector
James Lovell	Ofsted Inspector
Maria Roberts	His Majesty's Inspector

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