

Inspection of a good school: Samuel Whitbread Academy

Shefford Road, Clifton, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5QS

Inspection dates:

2 and 3 March 2023

Outcome

Samuel Whitbread Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at this school. They appreciate the range of academic and wider opportunities that are available to them. Members of the school community are proud of the school's involvement in sport and the arts. While many pupils represent the school in these areas at a high level, all pupils have the chance to participate in these at some level. Pupils are keen to be part of extra-curricular activities.

Leaders and teachers have high expectations for pupils, including students in the sixth form and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers help pupils meet these expectations. Pupils appreciate the range of subjects they can study and consider this a strength of the school.

Pupils feel safe in school. Bullying is rare and is resolved quickly if it does happen. If pupils are worried about something, they have staff who they can talk to and will receive the help that they need. Pupils' behaviour is positive in lessons and around the school site. Leaders recognised that some pupils needed extra help to get back into routines following the COVID-19 pandemic. They have established new expectations and implemented new policies to help pupils with this.

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

Leaders at all levels of the school have a strong, shared vision to provide a good quality of education for pupils and students. There is a wide curriculum offer in the school and the sixth form. While the number of pupils who study the full range of subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate is below average, leaders have made improvements to key areas that have limited uptake in the past.

Leaders have carefully considered the knowledge that pupils should learn and the order in which it is taught. This means that lessons build on what has come before. Pupils mostly benefit from high-quality teaching. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They use assessments to ensure that pupils have learned what they should.

In a small number of subjects, pupils do not learn as much as they could. This is because teachers do not always check that pupils have learned what was planned or correct pupils' misconceptions.

Leaders use a range of strategies to identify the needs of pupils with SEND. This process starts before pupils join the school. Once pupils are on roll, their needs are continually reviewed. Pupils with SEND, including those in the resourced provision, study an ambitious curriculum. Teachers make adaptations to their teaching using information provided by leaders about pupils' needs and the ways to help pupils. This helps pupils with SEND achieve well.

Leaders have prioritised reading across the curriculum. Pupils have opportunities to read in lessons and as part of weekly tutor-time activities. Leaders quickly identify pupils who struggle to read. They help these pupils to catch up. Pupils are positive about this and say it has helped them become more confident readers. They now enjoy reading more.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is positive, sometimes highly so. However, occasionally, low-level disruption can distract pupils from their learning. This disruption occurs mostly when teaching is not as effective. Leaders have recently introduced new approaches to help pupils to focus in lessons. This is beginning to help.

While pupils' behaviour is generally orderly and calm around the school site, some pupils and parents have residual concerns about the behaviour of a small number of pupils in some communal spaces. Leaders are sensitive to these concerns and have already started work to address them.

Leaders' curriculum for pupils' personal development ties tutor-time activities together closely with assemblies and dedicated 'engaging minds' lessons. This programme caters well for pupils' needs, and pupils see it as an important part of school. Pupils build a wide range of knowledge, including of equality, diversity, relationships and democracy.

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, enjoy a wide array of extra-curricular clubs and activities. These include an expansive sporting programme, music clubs and subject-related clubs. Sixth-form students lead tutorial sessions for younger pupils as part of 'The Society' programme.

Staff feel valued and are positive about the support they receive from leaders. They are consulted about changes that might have an impact on their workload. Teachers benefit from a wide range of training. They value the opportunities they have to work collaboratively with others, such as the work that contributes to a school-published research journal.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong safeguarding culture at the school. Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained to identify and report concerns they have about pupils. Leaders manage safeguarding cases well. They ensure records are detailed and follow up on concerns swiftly. Recruitment checks for staff are rigorous.

Pupils learn how to stay safe as part of the curriculum for personal development. This includes knowledge of how to stay safe online and how to manage relationships with others. Pupils can recall this knowledge easily and know how to report concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, the quality of teaching is inconsistent. In these subjects, teachers do not regularly check what pupils have learned or address pupils' misconceptions. This means that pupils carry these errors through into their work and can find subsequent learning more difficult. Leaders should ensure that teachers routinely check what pupils have learned and address misconceptions.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2017.

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	137948
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10268518
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	13 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,674
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	462
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ilona Bond
Principal	Nicholas Martin
Website	www.samuelwhitbread.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	31 October and 1 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Bedfordshire Schools Trust.
- The school has a resource base for pupils with autism spectrum disorder.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- 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 spoke with the principal, other senior leaders, subject leaders and other members of staff. The lead inspector also spoke with members of the local governing body, trustees and the chief executive officer of the Bedfordshire Schools Trust.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in these subjects: English, history, science, physical education and religious education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans for geography, computing and mathematics.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including leaders' self-evaluation, records for behaviour and attendance, and minutes from meetings of trustees and governors.
- Inspectors considered 300 responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 299 written responses from parents. They considered survey responses from 455 pupils and 56 members of staff.

Inspection team

Marc White, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Paul Lawrence

Ofsted Inspector

Sue Pryor

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023