

Inspection of Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School

Maidstone Road, Rochester, Kent ME1 3EL

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 March 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and students are thoughtful, polite, courteous and respectful. The school's culture helps them to feel safe and happy. Their behaviour is exceptional. Bullying is extremely rare and is dealt with very quickly on the few occasions when it does occur. Pupils have extremely high ambitions. Parents and carers are enormously positive about the school.

The curriculum is unashamedly academic but appropriately enriched with a complementary personal development programme covering aspects such as British values, citizenship, mental health and well-being. The school has a wealth of highly regarded enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities. Assemblies and tutorials allow students to learn about healthy relationships and responsible citizenship.

The culture in the sixth form is positive, inclusive and aspirational. Students are mature and articulate. They talk with remarkable confidence and insight about their learning. They demonstrate highly positive attitudes and commitment to their education. They act as excellent role models for younger pupils. Work seen in books and folders is of a consistently high standard.

Leaders talk with commitment and passion about the school. They are highly ambitious, as evidenced through shared values, policies and practices. Leaders have consistently high expectations of students. They promote courtesy, acceptance and respect for others. They are committed to personal development and well-being as well as the highest standards of achievement.

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

The curriculum is coherently planned, sensitivity sequenced and meticulously implemented. It is boldly ambitious. Content is suitably linked and developed beyond the national curriculum. The curriculum is well considered to ensure that pupils master the curriculum, learn more and remember more.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not left behind. Teachers adapt their practice to meet these pupils' needs. Their curriculum is not narrowed, and activities are carefully scaffolded to enable pupils to access them. As a result, pupils with SEND make exceptional progress in relation to national averages.

Pupils who qualify for pupil premium are very well supported by a dedicated academic tutor. The school is proactive in identifying how the pupil premium grant can be used to enrich and support their learning. As a result, these pupils achieve and attend exceptionally well.

There is a strong focus on the development of reading skills. A passion for reading is encouraged throughout the English department. Literacy skills are very well

supported and actively encouraged across the school. Pupils make good use of complex subject-specific language.

Teachers' subject knowledge is exceptionally strong and pupils appreciate their qualifications, expertise and enthusiasm. Lesson planning ensures that knowledge is revisited with an emphasis on retaining knowledge. Teachers use assessment effectively to check pupils' understanding and to identify any gaps in learning.

Character development is embedded into the behaviour policy. Pupils are taught explicitly about developing qualities which they will need to flourish in society. Positive personal traits and virtues are highlighted. This guides pupils' conduct so that they learn eagerly and cooperate consistently.

In addition, the school offers regular opportunities for character development. These include taking on roles of responsibility as well as being involved in clubs and enrichment activities. Take-up of these activities is high and gives pupils access to a wide set of rich opportunities.

Careers are well supported with strong impartial careers advice. Additional support is offered for students who are applying for Oxbridge, medicine, dentistry and law. The school uses alumni well to support careers advice and guidance. As a result, significant numbers of students continue to universities of their choice.

Sixth-form leaders have constructed a highly ambitious academic programme of study. They have considered the needs of students with SEND and disadvantaged students and have made appropriate adaptations. The work undertaken is consistently demanding. Teachers have specialist knowledge of the subjects they teach.

Attendance at school for all groups, including pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils, is high. Pupils are punctual to lessons and travel around the site quickly and with purpose. Sixth-form attendance is strongly tracked and is also high. Punctuality is excellent. Students develop strong independent study skills.

Leaders, staff and pupils create a positive environment where bullying is not tolerated. If bullying, discrimination or derogatory language do occur, they are dealt with quickly and effectively. Relationships reflect the school's respectful culture. Staff morale is high, and turnover is low. Leaders are very conscious of staff well-being.

Trustees and governors have an impressive understanding of their role. They perform their duties with enthusiasm and determination. The governing board challenges and supports the school in equal measures. Senior leaders welcome this challenge. The school benefits significantly from the help and expertise of the trust.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well informed about safeguarding and safeguarding practices. The single central record of staff suitability is compliant. All staff are provided with regular and detailed safeguarding training to ensure that they can identify and report concerns effectively. Staff are suitably trained in safer recruitment practices.

The school has a strong ethos of safeguarding. Leaders have effective arrangements that always act in the best interests of pupils to protect them online and offline. The school has a safeguarding curriculum that forms part of the personal development programme.

Pupils know what to do if they encounter any concerns and they are confident that these will be dealt with. Pupils feel safe and they are safe. Parents and staff agree.

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	136662
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10242414
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,479
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	424
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Frank Green
Principal	Eliot Hodges
Website	www.sjwms.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Sir Joseph Williamson’s Mathematical School is a much larger than average sized 11 to 18 selective boys’ school. The mixed sixth form is also much larger than the average-sized sixth form. The school is part of Leigh Academies Trust.
- Sir Joseph Williamson’s Mathematical School converted to become an academy school in April 2011. When its predecessor school, with the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted in November 2008, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The school makes use of 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 educational 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 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 conducted deep dives in English, mathematics, art, geography, physical education and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors spoke to subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with subject teachers, talked to pupils and students, and looked at samples of their work.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, teachers, students and pupils. They spoke to leaders at the alternative provider. The lead inspector met with trustees and members of the governing board.
- Inspectors looked at policies provided by the school. They studied curriculum documents, behaviour logs, attendance records and destination statistics. They looked at the single central record and reviewed safeguarding documentation, practices and procedures.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey of parents' views and other written comments. They reviewed the responses to the online surveys completed by staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Mary McKeeman	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Middleton	Ofsted Inspector
Rupert Prutton	Ofsted Inspector
Ann Fearon	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