

Inspection of a good school: Sawtry Village Academy

Fen Lane, Sawtry, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE28 5TQ

Inspection dates:

14 and 15 September 2023

Outcome

Sawtry Village Academy continues to be a good school.

The principal of this school is Simon Parsons. This school is part of Meridian Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Mark Woods, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Shirley Jamieson.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils speak positively of Sawtry Village Academy and are proud of its inclusive culture. One pupil commented that, 'As a person of colour, my experience has been brilliant.' This view is also reflected in comments from other pupils. Difference and diversity are accepted and celebrated. It is described as a happy place, where pupils feel safe and can talk to an adult if they are worried.

There are high expectations of pupils. Typically, pupils meet these expectations. Most pupils behave well and work hard in lessons. At social times, pupils are sensible and polite. As a result, the school is calm and purposeful.

Pupils' hard work enables them to achieve well. They benefit from having consistent teaching. Examination results for the school are well above the national average. Strong outcomes mean many pupils benefit from having a wide range of options in the next stage of their education or training.

There are opportunities for pupils to participate in a range of extra-curricular activities, such as sport and drama. There are also pupil leadership opportunities available, but these roles are not clear to all pupils. As a result, they do not always know how to contribute to the life of the school.

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

The curriculum adopted by the school is typically well planned and sequenced. School staff have been directly involved in developing the trust curriculum plan followed at

Sawtry. Supported by effective, trust-led training, it is implemented by knowledgeable staff. Pupils achieve well.

Assessment of pupils' knowledge in lessons is generally effective. In a small number of subjects, the delivery of the curriculum does not always address gaps in pupils' learning. This means that pupils are not always able to remember what they have learned.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective. The needs of pupils are assessed carefully, and communicated effectively to staff. Where pupils require additional help in the classroom, appropriate planning is undertaken. Pupils engage well with this support.

The school wants pupils to feel confident as readers and wants them to develop a love of reading. Several reading groups help engage pupils. Leaders take reading seriously and provide intervention activities when a pupil is identified as requiring more support. Large numbers of pupils undertook a summer holiday reading challenge. As a result, pupils engage well with reading.

Pupils' attitudes to school are typically good. They attend well and are punctual. While a small minority of pupils do not meet the high expectations of school staff, most pupils enjoy attending school and focus on learning. The school has appropriate systems in place for addressing any concerns around behaviour. Sixth-form students demonstrate confidence, good manners and maturity. They are excellent role models.

There is a broad assembly and tutor programme of personal, social and health education. This enables pupils to develop an age-appropriate knowledge of areas such as mental and physical health and online safety. Sixth-form students understand the implications of sexual harassment and would be confident to report this.

The school provides pupils with the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of school trips. The 'trips roadmap' shared with pupils enables them to know what opportunities they will have as they move through the school. Pupils talk enthusiastically about 'PLEDGES', which enable them to achieve recognition for undertaking activities, such as the '44 things to do before you are 14'.

The school is well led and managed. School staff are proud to work at Sawtry. They feel valued and motivated. The trust has a forensic understanding of the school. It has clear systems in place for supporting and challenging school leaders to ensure high standards for all pupils. A comprehensive programme of professional development opportunities is provided for staff. The parental community is overwhelmingly supportive of the school. One parent commented, 'My child is thriving at Sawtry Village Academy and they are enjoying their time there.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- While the curriculum is typically well thought out across the school, in a small number of subjects the curriculum is not delivered in a way that helps pupils know more and remember more. Subject leaders are not always clear about how curriculum design is used to address gaps in pupils' knowledge. The school should ensure that the curriculum design from the strongest subjects is shared to enable all pupils to remember long term the content they have been taught.

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 January 2018.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	136974
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10288495
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	839
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	148
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Shirley Jamieson
Principal	Simon Parsons
Website	www.sawtryva.org
Date of previous inspection	1 October 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school is a smaller-than-average secondary school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, modern foreign languages, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspection team met with pupils from different year groups to talk about their learning and experiences at school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents provided by the school. These included the school improvement plan, curriculum documentation and school policies.
- Inspectors considered 102 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View. This included 54 comments from parents and carers in the free-text facility. Inspectors also considered the 47 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Jonathan Rockey, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Cathy Barr

Ofsted Inspector

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