

Inspection of The Swan School

Marston Ferry Road, Oxford OX2 7WP

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
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

The headteacher of this school is Kay Wood. This school is part of River Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Paul James, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Kirsten Robinson.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's vision is for all pupils to succeed academically and personally. Pupils share this vision and are very proud of their school. They strive to 'achieve more than they ever believed possible'. To support pupils to achieve this, the school has established an extremely ambitious and inclusive curriculum. In all year groups, pupils produce work of a high standard, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

The school has a vibrant culture. This is seen every day, for example at 'family dining' or during the 'electives', which provide an impressive range of enrichment sessions. These experiences are positive opportunities for pupils and staff to spend quality time together and build relationships. They also support the school's very high expectations of pupils' conduct. Pupils' behaviour is excellent in lessons and at social times. Pupils are proud of the school's inclusive culture. Pupils feel happy, safe and valued at school.

Parents are tremendously supportive of the school. They particularly like the way that staff know their children as individuals. Many commented that the school listens carefully to parents and pupils.

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

From the very start, the school and the wider trust have worked together to share good practice regarding curriculum thinking. Consequently, the school's curriculum is carefully designed for each subject. Teams have thoughtfully considered what pupils must learn and be able to do at each point, from Year 7 to Year 13. In many areas, the curriculum ensures that knowledge builds and connects securely in the context of big ideas and broader themes. However, this is not yet as strong in all areas.

Teaching across the school is consistently effective. Lessons are purposeful and calm, which pupils appreciate. They understand it helps them learn. Teachers select resources and activities which enable all pupils to embed learning over time. They introduce new content clearly, and regularly check pupils' understanding before moving on. Pupils also receive regular feedback, which they find helpful. They use it to improve their work. In the sixth form, the quality of questioning and discussion is particularly strong. The school provides teachers with detailed information about how to support pupils with SEND or others with additional needs. This information is used effectively to make necessary adjustments in class. Consequently, pupils can remember and apply what they have learned, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND.

The school has a comprehensive reading strategy. This includes supporting those who need additional help. The school identifies gaps in reading knowledge precisely and targets support accordingly. The tutor reading programme means that all pupils experience a range of carefully chosen texts. Pupil voice has informed the

development of the programme. For example, in Year 11, pupils now select their own books, which are varied and ambitious.

The personal development programme is a strong and distinctive feature of the school. It contributes to high standards of behaviour and a strong safeguarding culture. It is carefully mapped out, from Year 7 to Year 13, so that pupils learn how to keep themselves and others safe and to stay healthy as they grow up. This includes learning how to navigate increasingly complex real and online worlds. They also learn about equality, other cultures and different points of view so that they are prepared well for life in modern Britain. The 'electives' provide pupils with opportunities to discover and develop interest and talents. Many also participate in the wide range of clubs and leadership activities. As a result of this programme, pupils demonstrate resilience and respect for difference.

The school's very well-designed careers programme makes effective use of links with local employers and training providers. Consequently, pupils are very well prepared for future study and the world of work. Sixth-form students particularly appreciate their work-related learning and bespoke support for post-18 choices. The school ensures that personal development and careers sessions are accessible to all, including those with SEND and those who are disadvantaged. Staff provide bespoke support where necessary.

The trust's strong support means that the school has been able to realise its ambitious vision. Rigorous systems ensure that there is robust oversight and effective support and challenge. Statutory duties, including those relating to safeguarding, are fulfilled diligently. The trust and the school have acted decisively to ensure that the school's organisation and culture underpin a positive and inspiring workplace. Consequently, staff feel valued and give generously of their time to pupils. They are extremely proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is some variability in how well the curriculum design enables pupils to connect new knowledge to big ideas over time. This could hinder pupils in being able to achieve the school's ambitious aims and achieve consistently highly. The school should continue its work to refine and embed thinking in this area.

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	147203
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10296532
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
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	852
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	70
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kirsten Robinson
CEO of trust	Paul James
Headteacher	Kay Wood
Website	www.theswanschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Swan School is a free school which opened in September 2019.
- The school is part of River Learning Trust.
- The school currently uses four registered and four unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation. The legislation requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with trust and school leaders, members of staff and pupils.
- The lead inspector also met with representatives of the trust board and of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work from all key stages. Inspectors also looked at sixth-form lessons in a range of subjects.
- 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.
- Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils to gather their views. They considered parents' and carers' responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also took account of responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Mary Davies, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Woodman	Ofsted Inspector
Andy Johnson	Ofsted Inspector
Lucy English	His Majesty's Inspector

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