

Inspection of Paternoster School

Watermoor Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire GL7 1JR

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 October 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Jennie Laird. This school is part of SAND Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Martin Hughes, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Antonia Noble. There is also a director of school improvement, Annette Fidderman, who is responsible for this school and five others.

What is it like to attend this school?

Learning at Paternoster School is like being a part of a big family. Positive relationships underpin the success of this school. Staff want the best for pupils. They have high expectations and look to ensure that learning is meaningful and fun. As a result, the school's values of 'courage, ambition, respect and enjoyment' are reflected in all pupils' experiences.

Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for. They are right. Bullying is exceptionally rare, if it ever happens. Everyone knows what is expected. This helps maintain a calm and organised atmosphere. As a result, learning is mostly purposeful. Occasionally, however, some teaching is less effective in helping pupils to learn and they lose focus. Nevertheless, pupils typically make strong progress over time. Parents and pupils agree that this school is making a positive difference to their lives.

Pupils enjoy the range of opportunities to learn and to prepare them for adulthood. They benefit from many interesting and stimulating experiences, including learning outside, being in the community and regularly celebrating important dates in the calendar. Pupils want to come to school, they like learning and they are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.

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

The trust and the school work together determinedly to improve this family-focused school. The success of their collaborative approach can be seen in the shared ambition staff have for pupils. Since joining the trust, leaders have systematically worked to improve the school. For example, they have rightly focused on ensuring that the curriculum is designed to meet the wide range of needs of the pupils. Processes to improve attendance are very effective.

There have been several recent changes to the leadership of school. The school has a clear vision for building on its current strengths. This includes making changes to the behaviour policy, developing the careers advice package and introducing new values. It is too soon, however, to see the full impact of these changes.

The school is developing a highly effective curriculum. Staff are trained to be skilled, whatever their role. For example, this means that curriculum planning is well established and sometimes very strong. Pupils learn within a broad and balanced curriculum that sits within four pathways. Each pathway has carefully sequenced planning that links to the national curriculum. The school uses its deep knowledge of specialist provision and individual pupils' needs to ensure that plans are progressive, relevant and engaging.

The implementation of the curriculum is sound, but not as consistent as it could be. Staff are skilled and use assessment prudently. Pupils are assessed carefully when they arrive. The school uses this information to ensure pupils learn through the

appropriate pathway. Ongoing formal and informal assessments allow the school to ensure that lessons are enjoyable and give pupils tangible opportunities to build on what they already know and can do. However, some changes are too new to be as effective as they could be. For example, recent amendments to the approach being used in some subjects and in some parts of the school are not as consistent.

The school prioritises reading. Significant work has led to an established, robust approach to teaching early reading. Pupils learn with pupils communicating or reading at the same stage as them. Regular checks ensure that lessons are adapted to meet individual need. Once ready, pupils utilise books that are very well matched to their reading ability. Consequently, pupils communicate and read better. They learn to enjoy reading. Many develop the skills needed to read and communicate independently.

Pupils' personal development is promoted exceptionally well. From the moment pupils arrive at the school, the curriculum is focused on preparing them for adulthood. Strong links are made between the curriculum pathways, the personal, social and health education curriculum and pupils' individual needs to ensure that pupils are helped to improve communication, gain independence and make sensible choices for themselves. Pupils benefit from an array of experiences within and beyond the curriculum. These include work experience, careers advice and opportunities to explore and build on their talents within the school's normal day-to-day curriculum offer.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Elements of curriculum implementation need more time to embed. For example, staff do not consistently apply the approaches the school has adopted to teach some subjects. This can impede pupils' learning. The school should build on and strengthen the consistency of the implementation of the curriculum so that pupils learn well in all areas.

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 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	147158
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10288238
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	63
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Antonia Noble
CEO of the trust	Martin Hughes
Headteacher	Jennie Laird
Website	www.paternoster.sandmat.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Paternoster School converted to become an academy school in June 2019. When its predecessor school, which had the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require special measures.
- Since the predecessor school's last inspection, a new headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher have been appointed. There are also several new teachers and support staff working at the school.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils with severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- 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.

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 met with leaders, including the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and the family support worker. They also spoke to a range of staff.
- Inspectors met with the chief executive officer and director of school improvement from the trust, two representatives from the board of trustees and two representatives from the local advisory board, including the chairs from each.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, personal, social and health education and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work. The lead inspector also heard a selection of pupils read.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 took account of the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and free-text responses. They also reviewed responses to the staff survey.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the leaders' evaluations, the school improvement plan, reports provided by external consultants, minutes of the governing body and information about the school's curriculum.

Inspection team

Matthew Barnes, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Gill Hickling

Ofsted Inspector

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