

Inspection of The Emmbrook School

Emmbrook Road, Wokingham, Berkshire RG41 1JP

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 October 2023

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

The headteacher of this school is Nicholas McSweeney. This school is part of The Circle Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Ginny Rhodes, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrew Beckett.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and parents value the 'family feel' of the school and how welcoming it is. Over recent years, Emmbrook has been growing rapidly. Pupils who join mid-year say that they settled quickly because of the care that they receive. Other pupils value the school's sense of 'community and togetherness'. Teachers are described as 'kind', with many pupils citing this as one of the best things about the school.

Pupils are confident that any support they need will be provided by caring staff. In particular, they know the importance of reporting any concerns they might have about themselves or their friends. Where help is needed, parents and pupils say that issues are effectively dealt with.

In lessons pupils are focused on their learning. They benefit from the school's recently developed, thoughtful curriculum planning. However, the school recognises that, as yet, not all pupils learn as well as they could. The school, supported by the trust, is resolute in making the identified improvements as quickly as possible.

During free time pupils are well behaved. They are punctual when returning to lessons and take pride in rising to the school's high behaviour expectations. Sensitive guidance is provided by staff to help everyone learn.

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

Since joining the trust, school and trust leaders have continued to put in place a number of improvements to the school. Staff are very positive about the way the school supports and trains them to develop their professional skills. They are proud of the support they give to pupils. Currently, further refinements to the school's policies and processes are being made. Leaders and staff are resolute in their determination to embed these improvements to ensure pupils achieve highly. In response, parents consider the school to offer their children a positive educational experience. A large majority say they would recommend the school to prospective parents.

The school's curriculum clearly sets out the knowledge that pupils need to learn within each phase of their education. Key vocabulary is identified and is used confidently by knowledgeable teachers. Lessons are calm and pupils are keen learners. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit from the thoughtful care they get each day from staff. Learning is often successfully adapted to ensure it meets individual needs. However, sometimes the work given to pupils does not always help them to learn as much of the ambitious curriculum as the school intends. In addition, while there are regular checks on what pupils know and understand, these are not always used accurately to identify what some pupils need to do next. The school recognises this and knows the importance of making the necessary improvements to ensure all pupils, including those with SEND, achieve well.

Well-trained staff identify the precise support needed for pupils who find reading more difficult. These pupils benefit from this. The school's new library is popular with pupils. A range of books help to enliven their reading. The library also forms the base for some of the school's numerous clubs and activities, such as crochet club, retro-gaming club, and the school's community jigsaw puzzle which pupils enjoy completing together.

Sixth-form students reflect on how well their teachers know them, and how the teaching provided helps them to learn quickly. The school's effective careers programme builds students' confidence in their future plans. Students' ambitions for their futures help to inspire them to work hard in their studies.

The school's 'FAIR' values of 'family, ambition, integrity and respect' help pupils to know what is expected of them. This results in a vibrant and good-natured atmosphere. Pupils value the diversity of the school and are respectful of each other. Tutor time sessions form an important part of pupils' wider learning. Here, pupils explore concepts such as equality and the importance of healthy relationships. The school recognises the need to strengthen this provision further to deepen pupils' understanding as they grow up. Pupils also benefit from the numerous extra-curricular activities including subject trips and musical events. The school provides additional support to disadvantaged pupils to ensure everyone can take part.

The school's recently revised attendance processes have had a positive impact in ensuring more pupils are attending more regularly. However, some pupils still have high levels of absence, meaning they miss out on too much of their education. The school is continuing to strengthen this work to help these pupils attend more.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders are continuing to refine policies and practice as they are implemented. As a result, pupils are not yet always learning as much as they could. The school must continue to support staff in fully implementing the school's policies and practice.
- The quality of teaching and resources do not consistently support all pupils to learn as much as they can. This means that some pupils are not consistently learning the ambitious curriculum that has been put in place. The school must continue its work in ensuring teachers have the expertise they need to ensure all pupils achieve highly.
- Some pupils are not yet attending school as regularly as they should. As a result, they are missing out on vital learning. The school needs to continue to strengthen its actions to support the improvement in the attendance of these pupils.

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	148453
Local authority	Wokingham
Inspection number	10296540
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
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	1,284
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	125
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andrew Beckett
CEO	Ginny Rhodes
Headteacher	Nicholas McSweeney
Website	http://www.emmbrook.wokingham.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined The Circle Trust in 2021.
- The school currently uses one registered and five unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of 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.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, curriculum leaders, and other staff.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the trust and local advisory board, including the chair of the local advisory board, and the trust chief executive officer.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, physical education, modern foreign languages and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- 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 inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also took into consideration the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys, as well as speaking to staff and pupils throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Ed Mather, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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