

Inspection of a good school: Saxon Mount School

Edinburgh Road, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex TN38 8HH

Inspection dates:

17 and 18 October 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might be outstanding if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Amanda Jagot. This school is part of the Torfield and Saxon Mount Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Richard Preece, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jenny Sutherland. The chief operating officer is also the executive headteacher and is responsible for this and one other school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where high levels of aspiration and inspiration go hand in hand. Pupils enjoy increasing success as they first settle, then move rapidly upwards and onwards. Pupils say that not everything goes perfectly all of the time. However, they readily explain that staff are dedicated, massively supportive and 'super nice', even when things are 'tough'.

Relationships across the school are strong, including between pupils. Older pupils in particular are confident to share their ideas. Inspectors' discussions with pupils were sometimes lively. Not everybody totally agrees with everything others say, but opinions are considered and listened to respectfully and with understanding.

Pupils know that they come to school to learn, and not just about mathematics and English. The pastoral support the school offers is equally as strong as the focus on pupils' achievement. Expectations of behaviour and progress through the curriculum, including the school's vocational options, are high for all. It does not matter what pupils' background or barriers to learning are, staff want the best for everyone. The impact of this is a safe, happy and industrious school, where 'kindness', one of the school's key values, has a high profile.

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

The school has a curriculum that meets pupils' unique needs well. Leaders at all levels are ambitious for pupils to succeed, no matter what their learning pathways are. Outcomes at the end of Year 11 are impressive. Staff are skilled at delivering and adapting their teaching so that pupils are successful in their learning while also being challenged well. Support staff play a vital role, both in and out of classrooms. Many have additional experience, qualifications and skills that make a real difference to pupils' confidence and engagement in learning.

The core subjects of English, mathematics and science are taught confidently by knowledgeable staff. Older pupils enjoy reading, especially the classic texts they are covering for their GCSE English courses. Pupils who are less confident readers are supported well and are given additional help when required. Pupils enjoy their mathematics sessions, which often encourage them to build resilience and to work successfully as a team if needed. Pupils' work in mathematics and science also focuses on building their communication and language skills. Checking pupils' understanding of key vocabulary is well established across classrooms. Staff also understand the importance of making their lessons relevant to pupils, linking learning to real life as much as possible.

The wider curriculum has good breadth. Pupils readily explained their positive thoughts about a wide range of subjects available to them when talking to the lead inspector. Teaching in subjects other than mathematics and English also fires pupils' passion and motivation to do their best. One classroom visit was marked by a typically positive exchange that led to a pupil replying, 'I am inspired; let's get on', when a teacher shared that she needed pupils to feel enthused by the work of artists Hundertwasser and Delaunay.

The school's work to develop pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain has a high priority. Staff understand the additional vulnerabilities of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They work hard to deliver personalised programmes to support pupils in and out of school. As a result, pupils are proud of their work and have high expectations of themselves and each other.

A stand-out strength of the school comes in the form of its extended extra-curricular offer, including after-school and holiday clubs. These are particularly important for pupils from additionally disadvantaged backgrounds, or those who are transitioning into the school. All benefit from being in a caring environment, which helps them to become more confident in their learning. Another strength is the work of all staff to build pupils' social and emotional resilience. This helps pupils gain the personal qualities they will need to first cope, and then thrive in their lives.

Staff are positive about the school and the support they receive from leaders. This includes the work of leaders and those in positions of governance at the multi-academy trust, who know the school well and set a high bar for all. Parents are equally positive. Many of their free-text messages contained strong testament to the positive impact the school is making, not only on pupils, but on their families as well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 November 2017.

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	141475
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10256541
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	160
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jenny Sutherland
CEO of the trust	Richard Preece
Headteacher	Richard Preece (Executive headteacher) Amanda Jagot (Headteacher)
Website	www.tasmat.org
Dates of previous inspection	1 and 2 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Torfield and Saxon Mount Academy Trust, a multi-academy trust that consists of two special schools.
- The school caters for pupils with autism, speech, language and communication difficulties, and moderate learning difficulties. A smaller proportion have social, emotional and mental health needs, physical difficulties and other types of need. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- 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 does not currently use alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

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 a wide range of meetings with leaders at all levels, as well as with teaching and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the multi-academy trust, who was accompanied by two other directors. He held an online meeting with the chair of the academy advisory board. He also talked on the telephone to a representative of East Sussex local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, art and design, 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. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of parents, 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 gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour, the school's wider curriculum offer and how leaders support staff with their workload.
- Pupils were talked to throughout the inspection to gain their views about the school. Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted through Ofsted Parent View. The views of staff were also considered through Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tom Neave

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