

Inspection of Shepherdswell Academy

Billingwell Place, Springfield, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK6 3NP

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 November 2023

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

The executive headteacher of this school is Ruth Ryan. This school is part of East Midlands 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, Joshua Coleman, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Kevin Crompton. There is also a head of school, Ellen Williams, who is responsible for this school.

The school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 13 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are thriving at this small, nurturing school. They embody the school's core values of 'collaboration, community courage, curiosity and creativity' in all that they do. Pupils develop a deep understanding of different faiths, cultures and protected characteristics. They welcome everyone at their diverse and inclusive school.

A sense of kindness and care emanates through the school atmosphere. Pupils keenly and routinely attend, greeting their peers, staff and visitors to the school with enthusiasm. They are consistently considerate and calm in their conduct. Staff put all pupils' emotional needs and academic development at the centre of everything they do. This helps pupils to achieve well and be happy in their learning.

Staff provide interesting ways for pupils to learn, which keeps pupils motivated. Pupils appreciate that teachers make their learning enjoyable and challenging. They are keen to learn and proud of their work. There are extensive opportunities provided to widen their learning experiences through interesting trips and visits.

Pupils relish the opportunity to celebrate their achievements. There are weekly reward assemblies to recognise pupils as a 'star of the week' and a 'remarkable reader'. They love receiving star badges and reading tokens, which they exchange for books at the vending machine.

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

Staff deeply care about the education offered. Pupils eagerly learn about the wider world through all aspects of the curriculum. They are curious and proudly talk about their learning experiences. This creates a joyful and positive approach to learning across the school.

There is a detailed and ambitious curriculum in place that carefully considers what pupils should learn right from the early years. Important knowledge and skills have been clearly identified and broken down into small steps. This helps pupils learn well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils are expertly supported by teachers, who ensure that pupils get help with their individual learning needs. Pupils who attend the specially resourced provision, 'Aspen', receive bespoke support. This enables them to develop both academically and emotionally. They explore how to build relationships and manage their feelings and behaviour. Consequently, they develop self-confidence and self-awareness.

The school and staff at the trust work collaboratively and invest time to develop the knowledge of teachers. This ensures that the school's research-based knowledge of curriculum development is well understood and implemented across the school. In many subjects, including history and mathematics, what pupils will learn is precisely identified. Teachers have the skills they need to check what pupils know, and this helps to identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge and to close these quickly. In a small number of subjects, however, the curriculum is at an earlier stage of

implementation. In these subjects, pupils are not always able to articulate their learning over time as clearly. Leaders know this and are providing support to embed the curriculum across the school.

Reading is prioritised. Children in the early years get off to a positive start when learning to read. These children, along with pupils in key stage 1, have regular opportunities to practise what they have learned in their daily phonics sessions. Pupils immerse themselves in the high-quality books they frequently read in class. Staff check pupils' reading progress regularly and systematically. Teachers provide effective and rapid support for pupils who find reading more difficult. Staff receive ongoing training required to develop their expertise in teaching pupils how to read. Consequently, pupils become confident and fluent readers.

The school is calm and orderly throughout the school day. The youngest children in the Nursery Year help to tidy up, and they take turns and share. Children in the Reception class engage in activities with enthusiasm. Routines are well embedded, and adults help pupils to manage their behaviour well. Disruptions to learning are rare, and pupils are well known by staff. This helps to enable positive learning experiences across the school.

Staff carefully thread teaching about relationships and inclusivity throughout the curriculum. This constant focus underpins the very high expectations that staff have for developing pupils' cultural awareness. Pupils understand why they should treat each other well. Pupils know that they are each entitled to their own opinion, and they maturely address each other. As a result, pupils' knowledge of other cultures, faiths and religions is exceptional.

The school's personal development curriculum helps to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils learn about democracy by voting for the school council team. Pupils treat each other with tolerance, kindness and respect. They recognise their part in creating a positive community and are proud of their school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The strong implementation of the curriculum seen across some subjects is not yet fully implemented consistently. This means pupils do not yet achieve as well as they could across the full breadth of the curriculum. Leaders should continue to provide support to staff, as required, to embed the curriculum securely and consistently in every subject.

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	138715
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10267871
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	128
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kevin Crompton
Chief Executive officer	Joshua Coleman
Headteacher	Ruth Ryan (Executive Headteacher) and Ellen Williams (Head of School)
Website	www.shepherdswell.emat.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 February 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Shepherdswell Academy converted to become an academy school in September 2012. When its predecessor school, Shepherdswell School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The school has been part of the East Midlands Trust since September 2012.
- The school operates a specially resourced provision, 'Aspen', for pupils with social and communication needs. Eight pupils attend the provision, each of whom have an education, health and care plan. The provision is merged with the resourced provision at another school and is based on a different site.
- Shepherdswell's Nursery has provision for three- and four-year-old children.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

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 school has an executive headteacher, who is responsible for the school, and a head of school, who leads the day-to-day management of the school.
- During this inspection, inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, head of school, teachers and pupils.
- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors and the chair of the trust board. She also had a phone conversation with the chief executive officer.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and design, and history. In each subject, inspectors met with subject leaders, talked to pupils, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to some pupils read to adults. Other aspects of the school's curriculum were also considered.
- 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.
- The inspection team took account of a range of other information, including the school's development plans, school policies and minutes of governor and trustee meetings.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and the free-text comments that were submitted. They also took account of the responses to the confidential staff survey and gathered the views of both staff and pupils throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Numera Anwar, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Ian Elkington

Ofsted Inspector

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