

Inspection of Sandringham School

The Ridgeway, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL4 9NX

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 February 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

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

Ofsted has not previously inspected Sandringham School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Sandringham School to be outstanding before it opened as an academy.

The headteacher of this school is Alan Gray. This school is part of Alban 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, Alan Gray, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Deborah Strazza.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish at school. In collaboration with their peers, pupils live up to the very high expectations set by the school. Pupils are well prepared to build enriching and successful futures for themselves. They are also enabled with the drive and abilities needed to make impressive positive contributions to society.

Pupils say that what makes the school great are the exceptional opportunities the school provides them to grow into highly capable young people. They take up these opportunities with the determination to succeed at the highest levels. The high standard of their work and excellent achievement in national assessments reflect the exceptional quality of education they receive.

Pupils enjoy learning alongside their peers. They work hard and thrive in the positive learning environment, demonstrating the school's values of kindness and humility. Equipped with well-developed social and academic skills, pupils willingly and capably help each other when faced with tricky aspects of their studies.

Pupils aspire to join the impressive sixth form at the school. Students reach levels of scholarship found in university studies and achieve exceptional outcomes. They model the very best of what the school expects, inspiring younger pupils to work hard, enjoy learning and take leadership roles within their community.

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

The school has a superbly designed curriculum. Each stage of learning is precisely planned. This ensures that pupils build a rich understanding of their subjects and remember what they study. Staff deliver the curriculum expertly and with consistent high levels of effectiveness. Staff routinely check what pupils know and understand. They provide timely support if pupils misunderstand or forget key knowledge. Across the school and including in the sixth form, the school's 'can-do' ethos and staff's relentless drive for excellence ensure that pupils, and students in the sixth form, master the curriculum.

Reading is very well developed at the school as an academic and leisure pursuit. Pupils enjoy reading and share recommendations of good books with their peers. They proudly wear badges showing that they have achieved the school's reading challenge. Pupils make enthusiastic and meaningful use of the school's well-resourced library. Staff are skilled at providing books that match the interests and needs of pupils. When pupils find reading difficult, staff support them effectively in lessons and in small reading groups. These pupils become fluent, confident readers. In turn, they become more successful learners.

The school has successfully developed staff's approach to supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Working with external specialists, leaders accurately identify the needs of these pupils. Leaders provide precise guidance, which staff use effectively to plan appropriate learning activities.

The high-quality teaching in lessons and small group support sessions ensures that pupils with SEND learn the curriculum extremely well. Staff also ensure that pupils develop their own effective strategies to overcome the challenges they face. In the sixth form, students with SEND learn and achieve exceptionally well.

Pupils understand the school's expectations of their conduct and live up to them. They take their studies seriously and approach learning with enthusiasm. Lessons are very purposeful and productive. Pupils proudly speak about their many awards such as house points and golden tickets.

The school's 'super curriculum', enrichment and extra-curricular programmes provide pupils opportunities to engage with the fulness of life. This is evident in the exceptional way pupils can discuss complex global issues. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, learn the importance of respecting the lifestyles and beliefs of others. They show sensitivity when discussing controversial contemporary issues. They have learned to value different points of view and the risks that come with dogmatic positions.

The school's comprehensive careers programme gives pupils the information and confidence to reach for and secure highly competitive destinations after leaving school. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, have meaningful opportunities to experience different workplaces. They also make useful connections with employers to learn about different occupations. This includes providing sixth-form students interested in careers in education opportunities to teach younger pupils alongside teaching staff.

Leaders, including governors and trustees, have the confidence of parents, staff and pupils. Stakeholders are proud of and appreciate the exceptional quality of provision at the school. Staff appreciate leaders' support in maintaining a reasonable workload.

Governors and trustees have a precise shared view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They quickly identify when aspects of the school are not meeting their high standards. They challenge leaders robustly to ensure that issues are resolved and excellence maintained consistently.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	136609
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10242350
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	1,770
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	559
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Deborah Strazza
Headteacher	Alan Gray
Website	www.sandringham.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This school is part of the Alban Academies Trust. The school became an academy in February 2012.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- 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

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 spoke with trustees, governors, the executive headteacher, teachers, members of support staff, and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages, physical education and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum, looked at samples of pupils’ work and considered planning documents in some other 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 observed the behaviour of pupils in lessons and during social time.
- Inspectors looked at relevant documents, considered pupils’ work and held discussions with leaders, staff and pupils about the provision for pupils’ personal development.
- Inspectors considered the responses of 185 staff, 1,441 pupils and 868 parents to Ofsted’s online surveys.

Inspection team

Al Mistrano, lead inspector	His Majesty’s Inspector
Jason Howard	Ofsted Inspector
Jennifer Brassington	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Pryor	Ofsted Inspector
Brenda Watson	Ofsted Inspector

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