

Inspection of a good school: Matthew Arnold School

Arnolds Way, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX2 9JE

Inspection dates: 30 April and 1 May 2024

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 not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher is Anthony Broadley. The school is part of the ACER academy trust, which means other people in the trust have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Nathan Thomas, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jill Cottee.

What is it like to attend this school?

Matthew Arnold is a diverse and inclusive school. Pupils frequently demonstrate the school values of 'kindness and collaboration' and are polite and respectful. While pupils know that bullying can happen, they also know how to report this. They know it will be dealt with quickly and is not tolerated.

The school environment is calm and behaviour routines are well embedded in most lessons. Expectations of pupils' behaviour are high and most pupils meet these expectations. Disruption to learning is rare. Pupils feel safe.

The school is highly ambitious for what pupils could achieve. However, this ambition is not yet realised. Not all pupils make as much progress as they could. This includes those pupils who need additional support to become fluent and confident readers. While there have been improvements in attendance, not all pupils attend school as often as they should. This has a further impact on their achievement.

Pupils' wider development is carefully considered. There are many opportunities for pupils to participate in clubs and most pupils benefit from these. Students in the sixth form appreciate being able to help shape the culture of the school and to inform decisions, for example through their involvement in a range of committees.

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

The school has an ambitious curriculum. This ambition is particularly high in art and history and the achievement of pupils in these areas demonstrates the curriculum is being delivered effectively. Pupils can talk about what they have learned, their next steps and what they want to achieve. This is also the case across the sixth form. However, this is not always reflected in all subjects. Not all pupils are achieving as well as they should. This is especially so for pupils with SEND or those experiencing other disadvantages.

While teachers have strong subject knowledge, they do not always carefully check what pupils know and can do. This means gaps in pupils' knowledge are not always clearly identified. Activities are not then adapted to allow those gaps to be addressed or to meet the specific needs of all pupils.

The school has focused on developing a culture of reading and they have an aim to be a 'reading school'. Many pupils do read independently and confidently. However, not all pupils are fluent readers yet. There are a significant minority who are still at the earliest stages of reading. While the school has clear plans to address this, these are not yet fully implemented. Too many pupils are unable to access the ambitious curriculum as a result.

The new behaviour system has had a positive impact on pupils' learning. Pupils know what is expected and the majority behave very well. Where incidents of poorer behaviour occur, they are dealt with swiftly. Pupils who need additional support with their behaviour are receiving the right help. This includes through highly bespoke work within the school and through the use of a range of alternative provision. However, not all pupils attend school as often as they should. The school has implemented a number of strategies to address this and there have been some significant improvements. There are, however, still a number of pupils who do not come to school regularly enough. This particularly relates to pupils with SEND or those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is having a significant impact on the learning of these vulnerable pupils.

There is a wide range of clubs available to pupils, including sports, music and drama. The vast majority of pupils participate in these and enjoy taking part. Trips are also available to all as part of their enrichment. However, the impact of COVID on these was notable. To mitigate this, guest speakers are invited to come and work with pupils. This builds on the 'core' personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) programme pupils receive. Here pupils learn about mental health, building positive relationships and the importance of tolerance. Pupils also receive extensive information about careers and the different routes which are available to them. In the sixth form in particular, students know that they are well supported in this decision making and there are frequent opportunities for them to talk to universities and businesses. Students in the sixth form are also positive role models for their younger peers, and they are given regular opportunities to lead others, including through peer support systems.

The school has taken effective steps to ensure that workload is well managed. Trustees and governors are expanding their work further in this area and most staff know they will be listened to if they have any concerns and their wellbeing will be considered.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not consistently make use of assessment to check what pupils know in all subjects. This means that activities are not always tailored to address gaps in knowledge. As a result, some pupils are not achieving well enough. The school needs to provide teachers with the right training to enable them to carefully check what pupils know and to be able to make the right adaptations in lessons.
- Although reading has been identified as a priority by the school, the strategy to address this is not yet fully implemented. This means that some pupils are not fluent and confident readers and they cannot fully access the ambitious curriculum that has been designed for them. The school needs to provide the right support to ensure that these pupils learn to read and can catch up quickly.
- While attendance has improved, there are still some pupils who do not attend school regularly enough. This includes pupils with SEND or those from disadvantaged backgrounds. As a result, these pupils are not learning as much as they could. The school needs to continue to build on the successes they have already had so that more pupils come to school as frequently as possible.

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 2018.

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	142104
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10322001
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	1288
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	244
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jill Cottee
Headteacher	Anthony Broadley
CEO of the trust	Nathan Thomas
Website	www.maschool.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 November 2018

Information about this school

- A small minority of pupils currently access alternative provision. This provision comes from six different providers, two of which are registered.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils at the school is below the national average.
- 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

- 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 the headteacher, senior leaders and other leaders. They met with a wide range of staff and pupils. They considered the responses to parent, pupil and staff surveys.
- A wide range of the school's documentation was taken into consideration, including policies and the school's action plan.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the trustees and scrutinised minutes of their meetings.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, art, history 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 visited a range of lessons in 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.

Inspection team

Zoe Enser, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Christopher Doherty

Ofsted Inspector

Claire Copeland

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 2024