

# Inspection of The Linden Academy

Osborne Road, Luton, Bedfordshire LU1 3HJ

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Inspection dates: 18 and 19 June 2024

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The principal of this school is Michelle Woodhams and the co-principal is Jordan Campbell. This school is part of The Shared Learning Trust which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Catherine Barr, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Sheridan.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils at this school are very well cared for by their teachers and other adults. Relationships are consistently calm, kind and respectful. Pupils are happy to work and play together. They feel and are safe. Staff and anti-bullying ambassadors swiftly remedy any rare incidents of unkind behaviour.

While pupils' outcomes in national assessments and tests have not always been as strong as they should be, pupils are now doing well. This is because they respond well to the school's high expectations. Pupils benefit from effective teaching.

From the time they start in early years, pupils show enthusiasm for learning. They know that trying hard and plenty of practice will help them to make progress. Pupils challenge themselves to remember the 'golden nuggets' from lessons. From the early years, children know that it is ok to learn from your mistakes. This gives them the confidence to try new things. Older pupils appreciate the guidance to push themselves beyond their 'comfort zones'. Most pupils are highly attentive in lessons. Pupils behave well in class and move around the school in an orderly way.

Pupils enjoy a wealth of opportunities to broaden their horizons such as trips, visitors and clubs.

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

The trust has worked at pace with the school to improve the curriculum and the effectiveness of teaching. Trustees keep a close oversight on provision. They invest in training and resources for staff, so improvements are sustained. Staff appreciate this and there is increased stability in the team. Some subject leaders are relatively new to their roles. They are working hard to further embed consistent, high-quality teaching. For instance, subject leaders use coaching and modelling well to help less experienced teachers to deliver the curriculum more effectively. However, some subject leaders do not always spot exactly which teachers or pupils need further support. They sometimes do not make the right changes as quickly as they could.

The school has constructed an ambitious, well sequenced curriculum. This clearly sets out the steps of knowledge in each subject. Teachers understand and follow the recently introduced 'Linden Way'. They regularly check that pupils have remembered important knowledge from previous lessons. Teachers make sure that everyone gets plenty of practice with new skills. This includes play-based learning in the early years and more sophisticated written tasks for older pupils. Teachers have clear goals for what pupils are to learn. In many cases, teachers have the expertise to check how well pupils are understanding new ideas and to adjust their teaching so that pupils can have more help or extend their skills. As a result, most pupils learn what they need to be ready for their next stage. However, in a few instances, teachers do not check learning as effectively. Sometimes they do not use these checks to adapt teaching swiftly. Where this is the case, pupils build up knowledge less securely.

The school has taken effective action to improve the teaching of early reading. Adults have the right training to teach children to read well from the early years. Teachers frequently check on pupils' phonics knowledge so that teaching is closely matched to need. Teachers spot pupils who have fallen behind quickly and put extra help in place so they can catch up. Older pupils joining the school at different points also benefit from this systematic approach. Pupils rapidly develop their reading skills. Consequently, they can understand their learning more confidently.

The school identifies special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) accurately. Teachers put extra help in place for those who need it. Adults adapt tasks and support pupils with SEND skilfully. This enables pupils to access the curriculum. As a result, pupils with SEND make positive progress.

Leaders know how important it is for pupils to be in school so they can learn. The school have redoubled their efforts to tackle poor attendance. This has led to significant improvements in many cases. The school knows families well and works with them to address any challenges.

The 'Linden Law' ensures that pupils know how to behave well and why this is important. Pupils new to the school swiftly fit in with the friendly, supportive attitudes of their peers. The few pupils who need bespoke support with their behaviour get the right help with this.

The school works tirelessly to give pupils a rich range of opportunities. These raise aspiration and enable pupils to discover interests and talents. They develop as well-rounded citizens. Pupils are tolerant and inclusive. From the early years, everyone is welcome and diversity is celebrated.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In some subjects, checks on the impact of the curriculum are not consistently secure. When this happens, subject leaders do not always spot where staff or groups of pupils need further support. The school should ensure that subject leaders have the right skills and systems to identify and address weaker aspects of provision swiftly.
- Teachers sometimes do not check pupils' learning closely enough to identify gaps or misconceptions. When this happens, they do not adjust their teaching quickly enough so that all pupils secure and build on the most important learning. The

school should ensure that all teachers use checks on pupils' learning effectively to inform planning and adapt teaching to support pupils' learning.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137324
<b>Local authority</b>	Luton
<b>Inspection number</b>	10318609
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	474
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	David Sheridan
<b>CEO of trust</b>	Catherine Barr
<b>Principal</b>	Michelle Woodhams, principal and Jordan Campbell, co-principal
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://linden.thesharedlearningtrust.org.uk">linden.thesharedlearningtrust.org.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	8–9 December 2021, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school currently has a principal and co-principal working together.
- The school provides on-site before-school care for pupils.
- The school is part of The Shared Learning Trust. This trust is merging with Advantage Schools in September 2024.
- The school does not use any off-site providers of alternative education.

## 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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, physical education, and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with staff, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum in science, art, and design and technology, and further examples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors reviewed a further range of school documentation and policies, including development planning and the minutes of trustee meetings.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders, including the headteachers, the special educational needs co-ordinator, safeguarding leads, trustees and a representative of the community cluster board.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took into account the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which leaders have created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents through responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free text comments. Inspectors gathered the views of staff and pupils through Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.

## Inspection team

Lynne Williams, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Michele Geddes	Ofsted Inspector
Laura Hewer	Ofsted Inspector

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