

Inspection of Pioneer Secondary Academy

Pioneer House, Hollybush Hill, Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire SL2 4QB

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 September 2024

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good

The headteacher of this school is Shilain Keshani. This school is part of the Sikh Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. There is also an executive headteacher, Harmeet Sahota, who is responsible for this school and one other. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Gurminder Singh Athwal.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are extremely proud of their school. They are partners in nurturing its welcoming and respectful culture. Pupils live and breathe the school's values. This is evident in their exemplary behaviour, keen participation in school life and positive relationships with staff and peers. Sixth-form students are also excellent role models in this regard. Staff know the pupils extremely well. They are vigilant and take any concerns very seriously. Consequently, pupils feel confident to speak up.

Staff share the strong belief that all pupils can succeed and flourish. The school offers a broad range of subjects in key stages 3 and 4. The sixth form is very small, so the school has judiciously selected subjects which reflect students' aspirations but also local employment pathways. Pupils value learning and they increasingly achieve well in lessons and in public examinations, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school recognises that curriculum developments are still embedding in a few areas.

Parents and carers are extremely supportive of the school and recognise how much it has improved. They embrace its ambitions and open culture. Many parents commented on how happy their children are here.

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

Since joining the trust, the school has had a sharp focus on the curriculum. High-quality training and trust support mean that subjects are carefully sequenced, and knowledge builds towards ambitious goals. The school's teaching 'toolkit' ensures consistency of routines and approaches in most lessons. In these lessons, teachers introduce new content clearly and select activities which help pupils to remember and apply their learning. Teachers also make effective adjustments based on the clear information they receive about pupils' additional needs and how to support them. In most lessons, teachers check understanding regularly. They address misconceptions swiftly. They provide helpful feedback and practice opportunities. Consequently, pupils are frequently able to remember important knowledge and skills. They increasingly provide developed answers, using what they have learned previously. For example, this was seen in mathematics and also in sixth-form Punjabi where students discussed social mobility with confidence. Sometimes expectations of pupils could be higher, especially in terms of how pupils independently and precisely apply their learning to different tasks. As a result, while most pupils produce work of an expected standard or better, including pupils with SEND, some could achieve even more.

Support for pupils who need help with reading is effective. Staff identify gaps accurately and target support so that pupils catch up quickly. Wider reading is starting to permeate the whole curriculum. For example, in science, the use of the book 'The Life of Pi', from the tutor reading programme, was used to bring photosynthesis to life. Though carefully considered, the school's reading strategy has not yet had the time to embed fully.

The school has a culture of high expectations for attendance. Absences have reduced markedly over time, including for disadvantaged pupils. However, staff are not complacent, and they are relentless in their efforts to help pupils who struggle to meet expectations. This support is targeted and strategic. For example, the school has modified term dates to adapt to cultural patterns of absence.

The school's excellent personal development and careers programmes prepare pupils well for their futures. Pupils from Years 7 to 13 explore and revisit personal, social, health and economic education themes each year. They learn how to keep themselves safe, including online. The careers programme regularly gives pupils opportunities to meet a wide variety of partners from the world of work, education and training. Sixth-form students have access to high-quality work experience. Outside lessons, the school provides a wealth of extra-curricular opportunities, and pupils value this. Pupil leadership is a real strength, ably led by sixth-form students. This includes roles in school but also increasingly in the wider community. The Gurdwara Sahib plays an important part in bringing the school community together, regardless of faith. Staff make thoughtful adjustments where necessary so that all pupils can fully participate in personal development and careers sessions, and the wider life of the school.

Those responsible for governance know the school and its community extremely well. Linked to the mantra 'better never stops for us' there is a relentless drive for improvement. Support and challenge are robust, not least linked to safeguarding. Staff are loyal to the school and recognise the significant improvements made. They feel valued and are confident that their welfare and workload are taken seriously. They are proud to work at the 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 implementation of the curriculum in a few areas is not yet as strong as in others. In these cases, pupils do not develop the fluency they need to be able to tackle increasingly complex problems. The school should continue its work with teachers so that all understand how to select and use the most appropriate pedagogical approaches for their classes. In this way, all pupils will be able to apply their learning – increasing precision and depth.
- The school's reading strategy is not yet fully embedded. Consequently, pupils do not always develop the vocabulary and confidence they need to read demanding texts across the curriculum. The school should continue to support teachers to deliver this strategy so that all pupils are able to read confidently an increasingly ambitious range of texts across different subjects.

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	149204
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10341926
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	622
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	65
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gurminder Singh Athwal
CEO of the trust	Harmeet Sahota (Executive Headteacher)
Headteacher	Shilain Keshani
Website	www.pioneersecondaryacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Sikh Academies Trust.
- The school currently 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

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and

management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 meetings with school leaders. The inspectors also met trustees, representatives from the local governing board and the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, mathematics, languages and physical education. 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.
- 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 spoke to a wide range of pupils and observed their behaviour in lessons and at social times.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation, published information about pupils' performance and minutes of trustees' and governors' meetings.
- Inspectors considered responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire, including free-text responses. They also took account of the responses to the staff and pupil surveys and gathered the views of parents, staff and pupils throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Mary Davies, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Mike Boddington	Ofsted Inspector
Tom Neave	Ofsted Inspector

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