

# Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Friars Academy

Friars Close, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire NN8 2LA

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Inspection dates:

14 and 15 January 2025

## Outcome

Friars Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The head of school is Jonathan Budd. The school is part of Better Together Learning Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Suzanne Ijewsky, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Peter Kelby.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thoroughly enjoy attending Friars Academy. They are happy and safe in a caring, respectful and aspirational environment. Pupils support each other in class and around the school. They work exceptionally well together and celebrate each other's achievements.

Pupils are proud to exhibit the school's values of Respect, Kindness, Honesty, Resilience and Integrity. They are delighted when they are rewarded for demonstrating these positive characteristics.

Pupils behave exceptionally well in class and around the school. As they are taught to accept and value differences, they understand that some pupils may need extra help to regulate themselves.

Staff have high aspirations for every pupil. They help pupils to succeed. As a result of a carefully designed curriculum, effective teaching and high-quality careers education, all pupils move on to purposeful destinations when they leave the school.

Pupils enjoy a range of subjects and understand how what they are learning in school will help them in their adult lives. They know that a knowledge of reading and mathematics, in particular, will help them outside of school.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe at school, at home and in the wider community. They talk to staff when they have any concerns. They are confident that staff will help them to resolve any issues that may arise.

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

The school identifies and meets the needs of the range of pupils at the school very well. The ambitious and appropriately adapted curriculum is carefully sequenced and delivered effectively. Staff have strong subject knowledge, present information clearly and check pupils' understanding systematically. They regularly provide helpful feedback to pupils. This ensures that pupils build on their knowledge successfully.

Staff help pupils to read, write and use mathematical knowledge with increasing fluency. Reading is prioritised to help all pupils access the full curriculum. There is a sharp focus on providing pupils with the phonics knowledge and comprehension skills that they need to understand what they read. Staff are skilled at helping pupils to become confident readers. They check closely to identify and address any gaps pupils may have in their reading attainment. Pupils are also helped to develop their communication skills. This allows them to share ideas, as well as wants and wishes.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are committed to their education. They are given the support that they need to succeed in a safe and positive environment. Staff apply their high expectations of pupils' behaviour appropriately. Some pupils have made demonstrable improvements in their behaviour and attendance.

Pupils understand the importance of regular attendance. They do not want to miss their learning. Pupils know that colleges and future employers will want them to attend every day. Staff use a range of successful measures to reduce absence. The vast majority of pupils have excellent attendance.

The school consistently promotes the extensive personal development of all pupils. They are exceptionally well prepared for life beyond school. Pupils access a wide set of coherently planned experiences that enrich the curriculum. They enjoy residential visits, trips to the shops and experiences of college. They also take part in a range of clubs, including choir, music, gaming, fitness, yoga and art.

The school's values, spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, and fundamental British values are embedded throughout the school. Pupils are encouraged to become healthy, responsible and active citizens.

Pupils are very well prepared for future success in adult life, education, training and employment. Despite this, the school continues to develop its careers provision. Pupils are given regular and meaningful opportunities to experience the world of work and to take part in activities at local colleges.

Senior leaders have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They use this knowledge to take effective action to sustain and improve performance.

Leaders ensure that highly effective and meaningful engagement takes place with staff, pupils, families and the wider community. Staff believe that leaders consider their workload and promote their well-being. Staff value the training that they receive and enjoy working at the school.

Those responsible for governance have a secure understanding of their role and perform their duties effectively. They are knowledgeable and well informed. Governors and trustees offer appropriate support and challenge and hold leaders to account for all aspects of the school's provision. They ensure that the school has a clear vision, fulfils its statutory duties and manages resources well.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **Background**

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in June 2015.

## 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>	140277
<b>Local authority</b>	North Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10347585
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	144
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	6
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Peter Kelby
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Suzanne Ijewsky
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jonathan Budd (Head of school)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.friarsacademy.org">www.friarsacademy.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	22 May 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The trust became known as the Better Together Learning Trust in September 2022.
- The head of school joined the school in September 2024.
- The school caters for pupils with a wide range of special educational needs, primarily moderate learning difficulty; speech, language and communication; specific learning difficulty and autism.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

- 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 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 spoke to the head of school, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteachers and staff. The lead inspector met with the CEO, the chair of the board of trustees, the chair of the local governing body and another trustee.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors looked at 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 considered responses to Ofsted Parent View. They also reviewed responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

## **Inspection team**

Simon Mosley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Elizabeth Mace

Ofsted Inspector

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