

Inspection of Skyswood Primary & Nursery School

Chandlers Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL4 9RS

Inspection dates:	4 and 5 February 2025
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Robert Bridle. This school is part of Ambition Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Alan Gray, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Deborah Strazza.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Skyswood Primary & Nursery School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Skyswood Primary School to be outstanding for overall effectiveness, before it opened as Skyswood Primary & Nursery School as a result of conversion to academy status. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where pupils get a truly special and wonderful experience. Pupils are happy and are kept safe. They all have a trusted adult who listens to them. Pupils actively help one another. For example, older pupils caringly support younger pupils at lunchtime through their play leader roles. It is a natural part of the school culture for everyone to treat each other with kindness and respect.

There are the highest expectations for all pupils. Pupils realise these expectations as they achieve exceptionally well. From early years, children develop passion and enthusiasm for learning. Pupils benefit from a vast wealth of enrichment opportunities. For example, in the pottery club, they extend and deepen their understanding of sculpture from what they learn in art lessons. They use a kiln to produce the highest standard of pottery, which they have exhibited alongside professional artists.

Children in early years learn to listen to each other, take turns and enthusiastically share their ideas. They quickly learn important routines, such as listening when on the carpet and tidying up. This provides the foundation for the attentive and highly engaged behaviour that is commonplace across the rest of the school.

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

The school has constructed a rich, creative and inclusive curriculum. Across subjects, knowledge is taught in considerable depth. This learning extends beyond the classroom. For example, in history, pupils visit a museum to learn from experts about World War II. This kind of enrichment is commonplace. It extends the knowledge pupils acquire across the entire curriculum exceptionally well.

Teachers skilfully check pupils' understanding. They provide further explanation and guidance for pupils where needed. Pupils with special education needs and or/disabilities (SEND) get support that is matched precisely to their needs. This includes the use of additional resources and scaffolding to support learning where necessary. This means that everyone secures deep understanding across the curriculum. This is reflected in many pupils achieving highly in national tests and assessments.

A love of reading is evident across the school. From early years, expert staff ensure that pupils learn to read new words confidently. Pupils get the precise support they need with specific elements of reading, whether it be phonics, fluency or comprehension. Pupils have access to a wealth of books through reading lessons, class books, library books and book shops. Pupils are passionate about what they read and develop deep understanding. Literature is at the heart of the entire curriculum. The school closely integrates reading with writing development, enabling pupils to apply their reading skills to enhance their writing. As a result, pupils produce writing of the highest quality across year groups. This is exemplified by the fact that every pupil contributed a piece of writing to a book that was published in the local bookshop.

In early years, teachers provide a wealth of interesting activities. These capture children's interest. For example, as part of a China theme, children develop their understanding of the world by running a restaurant. Teachers ensure that all areas of early learning are developed strongly. Teachers use their checks on learning to target precisely where a child might need additional support. This is especially the case for children with SEND. Visitors, such as members of the police and fire service, help to inspire children and learn about important roles.

Pupils' highly positive behaviour and attitudes are evident in how they consistently display the values of kindness, curiosity, resilience and respect. For example, Year 6 pupils have run extra-curricular activities for younger pupils because they want to help and support others. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance rates are high.

Personal development is promoted extensively. Hearing and acting on pupils' views are integral to the school's work. There is an extensive range of pupil leadership opportunities. Pupils can participate in residential visits that allow them to have new experiences. There are clubs and activities to suit a wide range of interests. Participation rates in these are high, including for disadvantaged pupils, because the school ensures these are open to all.

The school is exceptionally well led and managed. Highly experienced school leaders appreciate the further capacity that the trust adds. This has led to many high-quality training opportunities for staff. This ensures there is consistency in the excellent quality of education that pupils receive. Governors and trustees know the school well and diligently challenge and support. Staff feel happy and well supported in their roles. This leads to a highly motivated staff who are passionate about doing the best for the pupils.

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	148875
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10378588
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	239
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Deborah Strazza
CEO of the trust	Alan Gray
Headteacher	Robert Bridle
Website	www.skyswood.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school converted to become an academy in February 2022 and is part of the Ambition Education Trust.

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.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the local governing body and trust board. This included the trustee link.
- The inspector met with the CEO, the director of education from the trust, the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- The inspectors conducted further meetings with staff regarding provision for pupils with SEND, behaviour, attendance and pupils' personal development.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in English, which included early reading, mathematics, history and computing. 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 discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around school and at social times.
- 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 considered responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and Ofsted's staff survey. They also considered responses to the confidential online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

James Chester, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Sarah Merritt

Ofsted Inspector

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