

Inspection of Lincroft Academy

Station Road, Oakley, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK43 7RE

Inspection dates:	3 and 4 December 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The principal of this school is Emma Appadoo. This school is part of Meridian 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), Mark Woods, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Shirley Jamieson. There is also an executive principal, Richard Spencer, who is responsible for this school and one other school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school and seeing their friends. They benefit from the school's welcoming community, where they are well cared for. Pupils take up the many opportunities available to develop their interests. For example, they build their confidence by taking part in activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award or a residential trip to Wales. Theatre trips to see shows such as 'Les Misérables' in London are popular, as are the numerous sports and performing arts clubs on offer.

The school is aspirational for its pupils' academic achievement. Pupils enjoy the challenge of the curriculum, which is well designed to build on what they already know. Pupils benefit from teachers' high expectations. The majority of pupils take pride in their work, completing their activities to a high standard. Pupils are encouraged to persevere, even when tasks are demanding. As a result, pupils are well prepared for future learning.

Pupils appreciate the significant improvements in behaviour since the previous inspection. They learn in a calm environment, where disruptions to learning are rare. When low-level disruption does occur, adults typically address it swiftly and effectively, ensuring lessons continue smoothly. This positive environment supports pupils to concentrate well and enjoy their learning.

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

Under the guidance of newly appointed leaders and the trust, the school has made significant improvements since the previous inspection. Leaders have raised expectations and enhanced opportunities for pupils. As a result, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve highly, and perform well in national exams.

The school's ambitious curriculum offers a broad range of subjects enriched by meaningful trips and visits. For example, a trip to Berlin enhances pupils' understanding of their history studies. The school carefully identifies pupils' individual needs. Adults provide effective support to help pupils access the curriculum, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Strategies such as one-to-one support, sentence starters and targeted interventions enable pupils to engage with challenging content and build their confidence and skills over time.

Pupils in the ARC, the school's on-site specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND, benefit from the same high-quality support. They thrive under the care and expertise of staff, achieving well and developing independence. This reflects the school's CARE values and ambition for all learners.

Lessons are well designed to build pupils' knowledge and skills. Teachers are often confident in using strategies such as questioning and quizzing to check pupils' understanding and deepen their learning. However, there are inconsistencies in how effectively teachers check pupils' understanding and use this to inform their teaching. On occasion, pupils are not given the precise guidance they need to improve their work or

build on their knowledge effectively. As a result, some pupils do not consistently achieve as well as they could.

The school supports pupils at different stages of reading fluency. Targeted interventions help pupils improve their reading skills, and the school's Powerful Words programme teaches pupils ambitious vocabulary, such as 'marginal' and 'paradigm'. Building pupils' vocabulary helps them to understand complex texts and enjoy reading across the curriculum.

Most pupils demonstrate strong learning habits, stay focused in lessons and show a positive work ethic. However, sometimes adults' expectations of the quality of pupils' work are not consistently high. Sometimes pupils are not challenged or supported well enough to fully engage with their learning and achieve as well as they could.

Pupils value learning about topics such as healthy relationships in their Life Skills lessons. They are respectful of different races and religions and enjoy celebrating cultural diversity through events such as culture days. However, some pupils lack respect for characteristics such as gender and sexual orientation. Most pupils do report inappropriate comments when they hear them. However, some pupils do not report unkind language as they do not feel confident that raising their concerns will lead to meaningful change.

Leaders, trustees and governors (academy councillors) work effectively to drive improvements across the school. Many parents and carers appreciate the significant progress that the school has made. Staff feel well supported, contributing to a positive school environment.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, teachers do not check pupils' understanding or use assessment effectively to help pupils build on what they already know and can do. As a result, some pupils do not receive the most appropriate guidance that they need to improve their work. The school should ensure that teachers provide pupils with clear feedback, and support pupils to use this feedback effectively, so they consistently achieve highly.
- Adults do not always have high enough expectations of pupils' engagement in their learning. As a result, some pupils do not complete work to a sufficiently high standard. The school should ensure that adults intervene promptly when pupils are not sufficiently focused, providing pupils with appropriate support to engage fully with the learning and meet the challenge of the curriculum.
- A minority of pupils do not consistently show kindness and respect towards others and sometimes use derogatory language, often linked to sexuality or gender. As a result,

some pupils do not feel that the school culture and peer relationships are as positive as they should be. Some pupils choose not to report these incidents because they lack confidence that doing so will lead to positive changes in their peers' behaviour. The school should educate pupils further on the importance of treating others with respect and the impact of offensive language. They should also focus on building trust with pupils, ensuring they feel confident to raise concerns and that doing so will result in positive change.

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	136471
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10318603
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	935
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Shirley Jamieson
CEO of the trust	Mark Woods
Principal	Emma Appadoo
Website	www.lincroft.academy
Dates of previous inspection	23 and 24 February 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the trust has appointed a new principal and two new vice-principals.
- There is a specialist resourced provision on site for 28 pupils with autism.
- 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.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative providers.

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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with trust staff, including the CEO of the trust, trust curriculum leaders and the executive headteacher. They also met with two vice-principals and senior staff, including those with responsibility for pupils with SEND.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of trustees, the school's link trustee and school governors (academy councillors).
- Inspectors scrutinised documents relating to: school improvement and governance, behaviour and attendance, alternative provision, the personal, social, health and economic education curriculum, pupils with SEND and the school's reading strategy. They also held meetings with staff with responsibilities in these areas.
- Inspectors reviewed responses to Ofsted's staff survey, parent survey and pupil survey. They also spoke to groups of pupils, including single-sex groups.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, English, drama, music and history. 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.

Inspection team

Bessie Owen, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Suzanne Thrower	Ofsted Inspector
Wayne Jarvis	Ofsted Inspector
Jonathan Rockey	His Majesty's Inspector

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