

Inspection of The Martin Bacon Academy

Stirling Road, Northstowe, Cambridgeshire CB24 1DH

Inspection dates:	22 and 23 October 2024
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Sarah Louise. This school is part of the 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, Mary Abeyasekera.

What is it like to attend this school?

At this calm and orderly school, staff identify and celebrate each pupil's 'superpowers'. Staff often use these strengths or interests in lessons. This makes learning more engaging and enjoyable. Pupils love to take part. This positive approach supports pupils' well-being.

At school and home, pupils complete a series of 'PLEDGES'. These are ambitious and challenging goals that extend pupils' knowledge and help them to develop new skills. Achieving these helps pupils achieve more. This fosters pupils' pride.

Staff have high expectations for pupils. Skilled teaching tailors each pupil's development path to their individual needs. Through thoughtfully designed learning activities, pupils build their knowledge successfully. They also develop and practise multiple skills. For instance, pupils may complete a task to build their communication skills when learning phonics. As a result, pupils make exceptional progress from their starting points.

Familiar routines provide comfort and help to build pupils' self-confidence. They also help pupils understand the school's expectations. Pupils behave well and learn to consider others. They develop skills such as turn-taking and active listening. They also develop close, trusting relationships with adults who know them very well. This means adults can intervene and provide support when needed. This ensures that pupils feel safe and secure.

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

The school's curriculum is well structured. It has defined pathways for each learning stage and subject. This gives staff the clarity they need to implement the curriculum well. There is a collaborative approach to designing a series of lessons. This means that all staff know exactly what to teach and when. The school considers all activities as valuable learning opportunities. All staff are very clear about this. Pupils make exceptional progress because teaching maximises all learning time.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Each pupil has personal learning goals that cover all aspects of their development needs. Learning tasks align with these goals. Pupils receive the necessary teaching to develop their strengths. Staff also ensure that any gaps in pupils' knowledge are addressed. The clarity of the curriculum design, and the skills of the staff, ensure that pupils' knowledge develops extremely well.

The school prioritises pupils being able to communicate very well. For example, pupils use visual boards, photos or sign language to communicate where necessary. The school also places a high priority on pupils learning to read. Before starting the phonics programme, pupils learn to understand, and develop a love for, books. Teachers then customise the phonics programme to meet the varied needs of pupils. For instance, when pupils learn to read 'kick', a teacher shows them an example. Using real-life resources also supports pupils to understand letters and words. It also improves their comprehension skills. Over time, pupils learn to read, enjoy and share books.

Pupils learn about careers and choices for their future. These are also developed for each pupil in a bespoke way. The close links with the secondary school mean pupils who can achieve GCSEs learn the right content from staff with appropriate skills. The school's preparation for pupils' next stage is of exceptional quality.

Pupils behave very well. The school is very calm. This supports all pupils, especially those who find noise overwhelming. Pupils who struggle with their behaviour get sensitive, appropriate support to help them rejoin the class so that they do not miss out on learning.

The school has a well-designed personal development provision. This ensures that pupils learn to be independent. For instance, they learn essential skills such as cooking and how to travel safely. Pupils also gain insights into the world of work, including taking part in work experience. Additionally, staff support pupils to learn how to be safe online and in the community. For example, they are taught how to give their consent to others.

School leaders are highly ambitious for pupils and staff. They work with the trust and highly skilled local governors to provide well-considered oversight. Staff play a crucial role in shaping the school's development plans. This team approach makes improving pupils' skills a top priority. This focus benefits pupils, who make accelerated progress in their learning and independence. Efforts to reduce staff workload have proven effective, which helps with their well-being.

The school has also replicated its approach in a small, specialist provision at a local secondary school within the same trust. This fosters a strong working relationship between the secondary and the special school and provides valuable support to the pupils who attend.

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	147661
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10345519
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	127
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Shirley Jamieson
CEO of the trust	Mark Woods
Headteacher	Sarah Louise
Website	www.martinbacon.academy
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This school caters for pupils with: multiple learning difficulties; severe learning difficulties in cognition and learning; autism; and multi-sensory impairments. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is part of the Meridian Trust.
- The school has opened a specialist resourced provision for pupils with SEND at Swavesey Village College.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school does not currently have any pupils who are younger than five. The school currently has fewer than five students in the sixth form.

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 inspectors met with the executive principal, the headteacher, the assistant principals, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, the family support worker, class teachers and teaching assistants.
- The lead inspector also met with the CEO, the chair of the trust board, other trustees, and representatives of the school's governance body, including the chair.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and language, early reading, mathematics, design technology, and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also collected further evidence about how the school supports pupils' physical development.
- 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.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. They also considered responses to the online staff survey.

Inspection team

Jessie Linsley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Karen Stanton

Ofsted Inspector

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