

# Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: North Cambridge Academy

Arbury Road, Kings Hedges, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB4 2JF

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Inspection dates:

4 and 5 February 2025

## Outcome

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

The principal of this school is Jane Driver. 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, Andy Daly, who is responsible for this school and two others.

## What is it like to attend this school?

This school has high ambitions and expectations for its pupils. Staff support pupils well with their next steps by reducing barriers and raising aspirations. Strong links with local businesses and universities enable pupils to access engaging opportunities that broaden their horizons and support them to 'aim high'. Many pupils, including the most able, achieve well. They move on to a range of appropriate colleges and workplaces.

The school is a welcoming and diverse community. Increased expectations around behaviour and improved school routines enable pupils to behave well. Pupils treat each other and staff with respect. Staff care about helping pupils to do their best. A range of effective therapies, support and care are in place for pupils who may need help getting back on track. Pupils trust the staff in their 'houses' to sort out any issues, such as bullying, if they arise.

A rich range of clubs and other experiences complement the curriculum. The community café, for example, is a place where pupils can socialise and spend time after school with their friends. Pupils talk proudly about the variety of leadership and other opportunities on offer. This includes working towards their 'PLEDGES' award. These awards build pupils' confidence and independence effectively.

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

Working in partnership with the trust, the school's curriculum is continually refined to ensure it remains ambitious, inclusive and relevant to pupils' changing needs. The number of pupils taking English Baccalaureate subjects continues to rise. Engaging curriculum trips and experiences make learning relevant and purposeful. The curriculum prepares pupils well for their futures.

Effective training ensures staff's knowledge is kept up to date. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Overall, teachers ably monitor what pupils understand. They close gaps in knowledge or provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to build on what they know. Teachers support pupils' learning effectively in the classroom. Consequently, many pupils achieve well from their varied starting points.

The school ensures staff have accurate information about the varying needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Most staff use this information well to adapt their lessons or provide extra guidance and help. The 'Hub', for instance, provides effective additional support for pupils that may need it. Many pupils with SEND are successful with their learning. Work and training to support staff to adapt their lessons is still ongoing. This is because, sometimes, staff do not always adapt the lessons well enough to meet pupils' additional needs. In these cases, pupils do not learn as well as they do in other areas of the curriculum.

There is a well-considered programme to support pupils who find reading a challenge. Staff ably spot pupils who find reading tricky. Carefully planned support enables pupils to build their reading knowledge and to catch up with their peers. Pupils also develop and use a range of vocabulary effectively.

Careful training for staff ensures everyone knows the school's approach to supporting behaviour. The school listens to pupils' feedback, particularly with the challenges of the ongoing building work, and has strengthened behaviour routines and systems as a result. Pupils generally behave well. Lessons are not disrupted often. Staff understand pupils' varying needs and backgrounds, particularly those that find attending school difficult. Attendance continues to improve. This is because leaders have worked closely with families to break down barriers and get pupils back into school.

The school works determinedly to raise aspirations and provide pupils with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in life. A high-quality careers curriculum, for instance, is part of a range of experiences that motivate pupils to want to do well. This builds pupils' confidence and resilience. Pupils meet speakers or other external visitors through 'flatpack days'. These inspire them or teach them important knowledge linked to topics like healthy relationships and consent.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, continual building work and a growing pupil population, leaders have worked effectively with staff, academy councillors and the trust. Consequently, the school has maintained the standards identified at the previous inspection.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes teaching is not consistently adapted to meet the varying needs of pupils. This means, in these circumstances, some pupils do not learn as well as they should. The school should ensure teaching is consistently adapted around pupils' needs, ensuring that all pupils progress as well as possible.

## 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 good 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 good for overall effectiveness in February 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>	139401
<b>Local authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10345356
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	691
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Shirley Jamieson
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Mark Woods
<b>Principal</b>	Jane Driver
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.northcambridgeacademy.org">www.northcambridgeacademy.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	6 December 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the Meridian Trust
- The school uses one registered alternative provision and six unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Year 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical 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 met with a range of leaders including the executive principal, the principal, the vice principal and the school’s special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work.
- The lead inspector spoke to trustees including the CEO and the chair of trust.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with those responsible for governance, including a range of academy councillors.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of pupils on both days of the inspection. Inspectors spent time with pupils at breaktimes to observe behaviour and speak to pupils about school life.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 lead inspector considered the responses to Ofsted’s pupil survey.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of staff over both days of the inspection and considered the responses to Ofsted’s staff survey.
- The lead inspector considered the responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted’s online survey, including free-text responses.

### **Inspection team**

Damian Loneragan, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Cathy Barr

Ofsted Inspector

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