

Inspection of Sharnbrook Academy

Odell Road, Sharnbrook, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK44 1JL

Inspection dates:	25 and 26 February 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The principal of this school is Clare Raku. 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.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are enthusiastic about being part of this inclusive school community. The school values everyone. Pupils appreciate the support they receive from staff and enjoy their learning. Pupils enjoy coming to school and take advantage of a range of clubs, visits and opportunities available to them. These activities develop pupils' confidence and character so they grow to become well-rounded members of the community. There is a strong culture of safeguarding and well-being in the school. Pupils feel safe and happy. The school has raised the expectations, both for behaviour and achievement.

Pupils work hard and focus on their studies. Teachers calmly address any loss of concentration and provide support or direction to help pupils refocus. During social times, pupils interact in a calm and orderly manner and know who to talk to if they have concerns.

The school values pupils' wider development, offering a range of opportunities that pupils appreciate. Sixth-form students contribute to the community through their volunteering work. Pupils learn about and understand the importance of respecting differences.

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

The school has designed a highly ambitious curriculum for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and students in the sixth form. Remembering key knowledge is a priority in every subject. Leaders have designed the curriculum so pupils revisit key learning often, helping them to remember. The trust has supported the school in this work, which has hastened these improvements.

Teachers possess strong subject knowledge and present content clearly. In most cases, staff check pupils' understanding before moving on to new content. However, sometimes these checks are not rigorous enough. When this is the case, pupils move on to content they are not ready for.

The school identifies pupils with SEND accurately. Skilled staff work with families and external agencies to develop tailored plans. Staff use this information to provide the right support for pupils with SEND, which allows them to progress well through the curriculum and access the clubs and trips on offer at the school.

Sixth-form students are positive about their learning experiences and the wider opportunities provided. Teachers engage students in ambitious, challenging and independent learning. This enables students to achieve well and go on to destinations of their choice. Many students volunteer to support younger pupils in their lessons, giving back to the school and community that has served them so well.

Reading is a priority at this school. The school ensures that pupils read widely. A trust-wide phonics programme is used to support the weakest readers. The school gives support through extra interventions where needed by trained staff. These interventions enable weaker readers to become more confident and fluent.

In recent years, rates of pupil absence have been too high. The school has worked hard to understand the reasons behind this and has worked with families to help develop a culture of high school attendance. This work has increased the rates of attendance, meaning pupils are in the right place to benefit from the high-quality provision the school provides.

Pupils' well-being is at the forefront of the school's curriculum, including promoting pupils' positive mental health. The personal, social, health and economic programme is ambitious and reflects the needs of pupils and the community. Pupils have an excellent understanding of fundamental British values, healthy relationships and respect for the views of others. All pupils receive unbiased information on potential next steps and high-quality careers guidance. This prepares them exceptionally well for making informed choices for the next stages of their lives.

The school, trust and governing body work in unison to constantly improve and review the work of the school. The school has improved considerably since the previous inspection and now has the systems and processes in place to make sure this continues. Staff benefit from comprehensive professional development, which helps them improve and broaden their skills and experience.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The checks on pupils' knowledge and understanding across the curriculum are not fully effective in some areas of the curriculum. As a result, gaps in pupils' knowledge are not picked up and addressed as precisely as they should be. The school needs to ensure that teachers check what pupils know and remember across all subjects and use this to inform future learning.

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	136470
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10345301
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,688
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	355
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Shirley Jamieson
CEO of the trust	Mark Woods
Principal	Clare Raku
Website	www.sharnbrook.academy
Dates of previous inspection	21 and 22 June 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- Sharnbrook Academy joined Meridian Trust in September 2021.
- 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 hosts Meridian House, which accommodates a small number of pupils from this and two neighbouring schools, to offer a tailored curriculum.
- The school makes use of five alternative provisions.

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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, English, drama, computing 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.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of school documents. These included information about pupils' behaviour, attendance, the school's curriculum and improvement planning.
- 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 observed informal times of the day as part of their evaluation of safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspectors held meetings with the chair of trustees; the chief executive officer; members of the academy council, including the chair; the executive principal; and principal. They also met with other school leaders, teachers, staff members and pupils.
- The inspectors talked to pupils and staff to gather information about school life.
- The inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the free-text comments. The inspectors also considered the responses to the online Ofsted staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Ahson Mohammed, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Jason Howard	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Pryor	Ofsted Inspector
Louise Cooper	His Majesty's Inspector
Tom Sparks	Ofsted Inspector

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