

Inspection of a good school: Monk's Walk School

Knightsfield, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL8 7NL

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 September 2023

Outcome

Monk's Walk School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Matt Grinyer. This school is the only school in Monk's Walk Academy Trust. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Carole Pomfret.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending school. They learn in an environment where positive relationships help everyone flourish. Pupils work hard to achieve the high expectations their teachers have for them. Pupils appreciate that they are supported to do their best and their successes are celebrated. This ensures that pupils feel safe to challenge themselves and, consequently, achieve well.

There are a wide range of opportunities to develop pupils' interests and talents. Pupils value playing in a sports team, representing their house or being part of the orchestra. They celebrate these with the same enthusiasm as they do their academic achievements.

Pupils are well behaved, polite and respectful. Their pride in their school is evident. They warmly welcome visitors and show off their and others' successes. Pupils understand and celebrate difference. They know that difference is never a reason to be unkind, which means this kind of behaviour is rarely seen.

Sixth-form students value the expertise of their teachers. Students appreciate how this encourages a deeper understanding of complex concepts. They feel privileged to take on the role of positive role models for other pupils. They are a visible and respected presence around the school.

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

The school has designed an aspirational curriculum that identifies what pupils should know and be able to do at defined moments in time. Subject specialists have broken this knowledge into small, manageable steps. Leaders carefully consider the order in which each area of the curriculum is planned and taught. This ensures that teachers know

precisely what pupils should know and when. Pupils successfully build on learning they already know and remember.

Training ensures that teachers understand how to deliver the curriculum as planned. In most cases, teachers present information clearly. Modelled examples support pupils to understand how to structure their responses. Questioning checks pupils' understanding and helps teachers to know if pupils are ready to move on. This means that pupils are able to access learning activities with confidence. These activities help pupils secure knowledge and apply it to different situations.

Teachers expect pupils to be accurate when talking about their learning. In most cases, pupils meet these expectations using correct subject-specific language and conventions to explain what they know and remember. However, these expectations, on occasion, are less consistent for written work. Pupils are not always expected to use the structures for written responses set out by the teacher that will support pupils to do this well. This means that, sometimes, pupils' written responses are not precise enough to explain the depth of their thinking. Pupils are not always expected to detail how they have reached answers or conclusions. Consequently, what pupils have learned, or the depth of their understanding is not always clear.

The school has prioritised reading. Pupils are encouraged to read from a wide and increasingly challenging range of texts. Sixth-form students act as reading ambassadors for Year 7 pupils. For pupils who struggle with their reading, there is a well-planned intervention programme. This support addresses specifically identified barriers to reading. The targeted nature means that pupils catch up if they struggle with their reading. Pupils become confident and fluent readers.

The school has high ambition for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The student support centre provides vulnerable pupils with a welcoming and nurturing space. The SEND team is highly trained. Staff use this training to identify pupils' individual barriers to learning. They provide teachers with strategies to support pupils well. Teaching is planned to take account of pupils' needs. Consequently, pupils with SEND access the same curriculum and successfully progress alongside their peers.

Sixth-form students are knowledgeable and articulate. They produce work of extremely high quality. Students understand why it is important to contribute and they actively do. Younger pupils look up to them as role models. This helps foster the school's academic ambition. The support students provide is valued and appreciated, particularly by the youngest pupils.

The personal, social and health education programme is well planned. It develops pupils' understanding of important issues in an age-appropriate way. Pupils talk positively and knowledgeably about what they have learned about different cultures and faiths.

There is a wide extra-curricular programme. There are extremely high take-up rates, including for pupils with SEND.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel leaders consider their workload. They are supportive of leaders and trustees and feel part of a community where their views are valued and acted on.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are inconsistencies in the expectations of how pupils explain what they have learned in their written work. In some subjects, teachers do not always ensure that pupils explain fully how, for example, they have reached their final conclusion using subject-specific knowledge and vocabulary. This means that the written work of some pupils does not demonstrate that pupils are deepening their knowledge and understanding in a curriculum area. The school should ensure that, in individual subjects, teachers precisely determine the expectations for explaining learning through written communication. This will enable pupils to consistently show the detail and depth of what they know and remember.

Background

When we have judged good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 June 2014.

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	138632
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10288518
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	1,423
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	269
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Carole Pomfret
Headteacher	Matt Grinyer
Website	www.monkswalk.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is the only school in Monks Walk Academy Trust.
- The headteacher took up post in September 2023, having previously been the deputy headteacher.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers, which are subject to inspection by Ofsted.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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 held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, deputy headteachers, and special educational needs coordinator. They met with trustees and the school's improvement adviser.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, history, art and sociology. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- To further inspect the curriculum, inspectors reviewed documentation setting out support for pupils with SEND.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to review safeguarding records, as well as the school business manager to scrutinise the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. To further evaluate safeguarding, inspectors also spoke to governors, staff and pupils and reviewed surveys.
- To gather pupils' views, inspectors spent time observing and speaking to pupils. The lead inspector reviewed the 24 responses to the pupil survey.
- To gather parents' views, inspectors reviewed the 55 responses and 54 free-text responses submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors spoke with several staff and reviewed the 15 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Dave Gibson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jennifer Brassington

Ofsted Inspector

Catherine Wilson

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023