

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Sharples School

Hill Cot Road, Sharples, Bolton, Lancashire BL1 8SN

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 January 2025

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that the school's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Caroline Molyneux. The school is part of Sharples School, a Multi Academy Trust. This is currently the only school in the trust. The school is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Shepley.

What is it like to attend this school?

At Sharples school, pupils embody their school motto of 'Learn, Dream, Achieve'. They flourish in a successful and happy school community that supports them to be the very best that they can be.

Pupils rise to the extremely high academic expectations that the school sets. Learning is central to all their experiences, and their engagement in lessons is exceptional. They are aspirational for themselves and others. The curriculum is expertly designed to meet pupils' needs and interests. Pupils thrive and achieve highly.

Pupils consider it a privilege to be part of their school, where they feel safe and accepted. Their exemplary behaviour actively upholds and promotes the school's ethos. They behave with respect and proudly celebrate their own achievements as well as those of their peers.

Pupils' learning and achievement are enriched by a wide range of experiences that support them to develop a sense of responsibility and confidence. For example, the 'Student Affairs Committee' regularly organises school and charity events. It actively instigates and contributes towards the school's aim to bring about positive changes for pupils.

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

Since the previous inspection, the school has strived successfully to refine and develop the overarching curriculum offer for pupils. An increasing number of pupils are choosing to take the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects. All pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), access a broad and ambitious curriculum.

Subject curriculums are meticulously designed. In all subjects, teachers ensure that pupils are extremely clear about the important subject knowledge that they need to know and the order in which they are learning it. Teachers use their expert subject knowledge to break learning down into small chunks. They rigorously assess and revisit precisely what pupils know and understand so that they can skilfully support pupils to fill in any gaps in their knowledge. This supports pupils to build their knowledge securely over time and achieve highly in a range of subjects.

The school accurately identifies and supports the needs of pupils with SEND, including those who access the specially resourced provision for visual impairment. Teachers receive specialist training so that they can adapt the delivery of the curriculum effectively to meet pupils' individual needs. This allows pupils with SEND to access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers and achieve well.

Reading is prioritised and promoted so that pupils are encouraged to read regularly for pleasure, for example, in the school library and as part of competitions. In lessons, teachers focus on the use of subject-specific, ambitious vocabulary that pupils understand and use with confidence. The school identifies and supports any pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge, including the use of phonics when needed. This helps them to access the curriculum and to read more fluently.

Around school, pupils are polite, respectful and kind to each other. In lessons, pupils are focused and hardworking. They take pride and interest in their own learning. Their mature and positive attitudes create a learning environment that supports high achievement for all.

The school ensures that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, benefit from an enriched programme to support their wider personal development. For example, pupils take part in trips and residential to places of cultural and educational interest both locally and abroad. The vast majority of pupils enjoy taking part in the extensive extra-curricular offer of clubs and activities. These range from sports, such as football and darts, to other areas of interest, such as robotics and chess.

A comprehensive programme of careers information, education, advice and guidance ensures that pupils are fully prepared for their next steps in life. Pupils are confident and aspirational about their own future plans.

Trustees are highly reflective and provide the school with perceptive support and challenge. Leaders' thoughtful, strategic decisions ensure that staff's workload is well managed so that staff well-being is promoted. This ensures that staff are continually

developing professionally and having a positive impact in their roles to support pupils' learning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 predecessor school, Sharples School Science Specialist College, to be good for overall effectiveness in September 2013.

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	142232
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10348319
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,223
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of the trust	John Shepley
Headteacher	Caroline Molyneux
Website	www.sharplesschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 May 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is currently the only school in Sharples School, A Multi Academy Trust.
- The school has specially resourced provision for a small number of pupils who are visually impaired.
- The school uses five unregistered alternative providers for a small number of pupils, part time.
- 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.

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.

- The lead inspector met with representatives of the trust board, including the chair of the trust board.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. They met with a range of staff throughout the inspection to gather their views.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey. Inspectors met with a range of pupils from different year groups to gather their views about school life. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school.
- 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

Amanda Downing, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Chris Beard	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Pennington	His Majesty's 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 2025