

# Inspection of a good school: Fitzharrys School

Northcourt Road, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 1NP

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Inspection dates:

25 and 26 April 2023

## Outcome

Fitzharrys School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

There is a strong sense of inclusion and community at this school. Pupils proudly show the school values of 'aspiration, opportunity, integrity'. They consistently demonstrate kindness and support towards each other. Pupils' relationships with staff are built on mutual respect. They know that staff have their best interests at heart and as such they feel safe, happy and cared for.

Pupils learn to become responsible citizens and are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They are knowledgeable about equality and human rights and actively celebrate diversity. Pupils care about their school community. They appreciate how much leaders respond to the views they share through the school council.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour. As a result, pupils learn in a calm and purposeful environment. Staff consistently apply the school's behaviour policy well. Consequently, pupils are clear about what is expected from them. Staff manage the rare instances of low-level disruption effectively, which reduces any potential impact on how well pupils learn. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), have the support they need to learn well, and pupils attain highly in public examinations. In lessons, pupils are resilient and focused on their work.

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

Leaders and governors have high ambitions for what pupils will achieve. School leaders are committed to ensuring that pupils study a broad curriculum across the school. They are clear that in doing so, pupils will have the knowledge to study a range of subjects in key stage 4 and the sixth form.

The curriculum is coherent and well sequenced. Leaders have designed it so that pupils' knowledge is revisited and built upon each year. They have set out the small steps of knowledge that pupils will need to learn and remember. This means that all pupils, including those with SEND, progress well through the school's curriculum. In the sixth

form, teachers are highly knowledgeable about the content they teach. They deliver complex content clearly to students. Students learn well in lessons and use high-level vocabulary in their responses.

Leaders provide staff with effective training and support. As a result, teachers have strong subject knowledge. They ask skilful questions and plan activities which capture pupils' interest and curiosity. Teachers check how well pupils learn and rapidly address any misconceptions well. Leaders have made sure that reading and the development of pupils' vocabulary run through the curriculum. They have prioritised the support for those at the earliest stages of reading. Staff identify the needs of weaker readers accurately and quickly. They put in place effective extra activities that help pupils become confident and fluent readers.

Staff receive expert training to spot when a pupil may have additional needs. Most staff swiftly identify the needs of pupils with SEND and work with the inclusion team to put the right support in place. Leaders have made rapid improvements to the provision for pupils with SEND. Leaders are aware of the need to further refine these changes and have made a secure start to this work. Currently, the support for some pupils is not as precise as it could be.

Leaders have planned a comprehensive approach to developing pupils' character. In 'hot spot' tutor sessions, pupils learn about the cultures and religions of different places around the world. Leaders use assemblies and wider development days to raise pupils' awareness of important topics such as mental health. Pupils know how to take care of their mental health and well-being. They learn how to keep themselves safe and about healthy relationships and consent. Leaders have planned a sequenced careers programme for pupils from Year 7 onwards. All pupils, including students in the sixth form, receive regular and unbiased careers advice. They are well informed about future study options and career pathways.

Leaders promote high attendance to pupils and parents. While most pupils attend school regularly, persistent absence of vulnerable pupils is too high. These pupils do not consistently benefit from what the school has to offer. Leaders are aware of this and continue to work well with families and external agencies to improve attendance.

Governors and trustees are determined that all pupils will achieve well. They closely evaluate the impact of leaders' actions. Leaders communicate with and support parents well. Parents appreciate this and value the effective leadership in place. Staff are proud to work at this school. Leaders have created a culture where staff feel valued. Leaders' ambitions inspire staff to create the best possible provision for all pupils.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained to identify when a pupil or their family need help. They refer any concerns rapidly, and leaders take swift action to respond. Leaders work well with external agencies to make sure pupils and their families get the right support at the right

time. Safeguarding records are detailed and show the timely and appropriate response of leaders when a concern has been raised. Leaders are robust in the checks they make in the recruitment of new staff. Leaders are aware of risks in the local and online community and make sure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe.

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

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

- Provision for pupils with SEND is still being refined by leaders. This means that the support that some pupils receive is not as precise as it could be. Leaders should continue their work to enhance and embed practice across the entire school and ensure systems for oversight are consistently robust.
- Persistent absence of the most vulnerable pupils is too high. These pupils do not consistently benefit from all that school has to offer. Leaders should continue their work to refine strategies that will reduce persistent absence further.

## **Background**

When we have judged a school to be 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Fitzharrys School, to be good in June 2016.

## **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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and

pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	146392
<b>Local authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10256427
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	679
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	88
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Jonathan Hopkins
<b>Headteacher</b>	Will Speke
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.fitzharrys.oxon.sch.uk">www.fitzharrys.oxon.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Fitzharrys School converted to become an academy school in November 2018. When its predecessor school, Fitzharrys School, was last inspected by Ofsted in June 2016 it was judged to be good overall.
- Both the headteacher and chair of governors are new in post since the predecessor school was last inspected in June 2016.
- Fitzharrys School is part of the Abingdon Learning Trust.
- The school makes use of two registered alternative provisions. They also make use of five unregistered alternative provisions.
- 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.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND on site. It caters

for 14 pupils with speech, language and communication needs.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other members of the leadership team. The lead inspector met with the chair of governors and one other member of the governing body.
- The lead inspector also met with representatives from the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics and languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons. They also spoke to pupils in lessons and during playtimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors considered a range of documents, including leaders' evaluations of the school, their school improvement plan and minutes from governors' meetings.
- Inspectors took into account the views of parents and carers through their responses to Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors took account of the views of staff and pupils through conversations and the responses to the online staff and pupil surveys.
- Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements in the school by speaking with leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leads to discuss the arrangements for safeguarding. During these meetings, the lead inspector scrutinised records and sampled case files to explore how the school identifies and supports pupils at risk of harm. The team inspector examined the school's work to recruit and check on the suitability of staff. Inspectors also checked the knowledge of staff about their responsibilities.

## Inspection team

Nina Marabese, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jason Philipsz

Ofsted Inspector

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