

Inspection of Samuel Ward Academy

Chalkstone Way, Haverhill, Suffolk CB9 0LD

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 November 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Samuel Ward Academy is a warm, welcoming school. Pupils get on well with each other and with staff. Staff care about pupils and students in the sixth form and want the best for them. Pupils who find school life tricky or who need extra help are supported well by staff. Pupils can visit places such as 'the study' to receive support for their well-being or get additional help with their learning.

Pupils respect staff and each other. Pupils' behaviour continues to improve because pupils have responded to the raised expectations within the new behaviour system. Lessons are seldom disrupted and most pupils enjoy their learning. Pupils are kept safe in this school. Any bullying is dealt with quickly by staff. Pupils understand that prejudicial language is not tolerated. Pupils 'call this out' when it happens. Pupils trust staff to sort out their worries or concerns.

Pupils experience a well-planned personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum. This is complemented by a range of assemblies, form time and personal development lessons. As a result, pupils have a good understanding about topics, like diversity, citizenship and healthy relationships. Pupils enjoy the 'enrichment programme'. This offers a number of different experiences, like film club and 'book and biscuits'.

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

Senior leaders, with the support from the trust and governors, have effectively tackled the key issues highlighted in the previous inspection report. Against the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, leader's actions, coupled with the commitment from staff at all levels, means that Samuel Ward Academy is now a good school.

The curriculum, through to sixth form, is ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils, and students in sixth form, study a broad range of different academic and technical subjects. Leaders reflect regularly on their curriculum offer, particularly in sixth form, and continue to adjust how subjects are laid out, so they support pupil and student learning.

Curriculum leaders have thought carefully about their subject plans. They have identified exactly what they want pupils to know. This knowledge is arranged in a logical order, so pupils build their learning effectively as they move through the school. The curriculum provides pupils and students with a solid foundation of knowledge that readies them well for their next steps. As a result, pupils make good progress.

Leaders ensure that staff access a range of high-quality professional development that supports them to strengthen their own subject knowledge. Teachers understand

their subjects well. During lessons, teachers routinely check if pupils have gaps in their understanding. Generally, teachers choose resources and activities that support pupils' learning. However, a small number of teachers do not use the accurate information outlining the needs of pupils with SEND well enough. Consequently, these teachers do not always select the most appropriate approaches or adaptations to support pupils with SEND as effectively as they could. As a result, a small number of pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as their peers.

Leaders have established an effective process to identify pupils who find reading tricky. Pupils are supported by well-considered reading interventions that help them to catch up and access the school's vocabulary-rich curriculum. Leaders have put appropriate support in place to help pupils become confident, fluent readers.

Leaders' high expectations of behaviour are shared and understood by staff and pupils. The school is typically calm and pupils focused on their learning. Suspensions are reducing while rewards are increasing. Leaders react quickly to the information they collect about behaviour, for example addressing pupils' concerns about behaviour in the corridors. Pupils and staff can see the improvements.

The PSHE curriculum contributes well to pupils' wider development, including how pupils respect each other's differences. Leaders ensure that sensitive topics are introduced and taught in an age-appropriate way. The PSHE curriculum stretches up into sixth form, where students have regular lessons that support them with wider aspects of life, for example learning about how to manage their money.

The careers programme is well planned. Pupils, and students in sixth form, learn about the careers and opportunities available to them. All pupils have access to high-quality independent careers advice and guidance, which prepares them appropriately for their next steps. Students move on to a range of universities, apprenticeships and workplaces.

Leaders and governors work closely together to improve the school. Governors and trustees hold leaders effectively to account for their actions to ensure decisions are always in the best interests of pupils. Governors have ensured that staff at all levels access the right support and training to improve their practice. Consequently, staff are well supported by leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff are well trained to spot if a pupil is at risk of harm. Staff understand the processes to report safeguarding concerns. Leaders' safeguarding records have clear timelines and show prompt and appropriate actions taken. Leaders use a range of different agencies to get pupils the help they need. They follow up concerns if external responses are not timely.

Leaders have appropriate systems in place to deal with concerns about adults or to tackle allegations of child-on-child abuse.

Staff teach pupils how to keep safe. Consequently, pupils have a good understanding about the risks to themselves in the community and online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not always adapt their lessons effectively to cater for the needs of pupils with SEND. This means that these pupils do not always achieve as well as they could. Leaders should ensure all staff have the right knowledge and training, so that all pupils with SEND get the support they need to learn successfully.

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

Unique reference number	136322
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10241123
Type of school	Secondary
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	1221
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	146
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Christine Quinn
Headteacher	Andrew Hunter
Website	http://www.samuelward.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 – 7 March 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher is currently the executive headteacher of this school and a local primary school.
- The school uses three registered alternative provisions.
- The requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships, are met.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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 carried out deep dives in the following subjects: geography, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages, physical education and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils about learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also considered the English curriculum and the school's approach to supporting whole-school reading.
- Inspectors visited a range of sixth-form lessons across both days of inspection.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the trust, including the chief executive officer of the trust.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of pupils and students in the sixth form. Meetings were held with both mixed and single gender groups.
- Inspectors met with a range of leaders including the school's special educational needs coordinator, the careers leader, the head of sixth form and other senior leaders.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector met with the school's safeguarding leaders. Inspectors looked closely at safeguarding systems, processes and records. They spoke with pupils, staff, governors and trustees about safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the 120 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 114 free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the 67 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff and 185 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

Damian Loneragan, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
David Piercy	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Robinson	Ofsted Inspector
Georgina Atkinson	Ofsted Inspector
Jim McAtear	Ofsted Inspector

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