

# Inspection of Sandymoor Ormiston Academy

Wharford Lane, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 1QU

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Inspection dates: 17 and 18 April 2024

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The principal of this school is Sally Jones. The school is part of Ormiston Academies 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), Tom Rees, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Julius Weinberg.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The school has high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils are supported to think deeply about what they are learning. Most pupils gain secure knowledge in the subjects that they study. They achieve well.

Pupils enjoy attending this friendly and warm school. Pupils usually respect and care for those around them. On the rare occasions when this is not the case, staff take prompt and decisive action. Pupils feel well looked after and safe.

Pupils appreciate the well-established routines that ensure the school day runs smoothly. Staff support pupils with a friendly presence around the school site. They carefully observe pupils' interactions and proactively guide pupils to think about their behaviour when they need it.

Pupils enjoy well-managed breaktimes and lunchtimes. They use their time well to socialise or to take part in the activities that are available. Pupils usually get along well with each other.

Many pupils develop their interests and talents through the rich offer of extra-curricular clubs and activities that take place during and after the school day. For example, the house system supports pupils to develop a healthy competitive sporting spirit and team pride. Beyond sport, pupils also value the opportunities that they get to participate with other schools as regional or national representatives for the trust's student voice.

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

Since the school opened in 2020, it has progressively raised its ambition for what pupils can learn and should achieve. During this period, the school has skilfully utilised the support from the trust to develop the knowledge and skills of all who work within its community. Consequently, the school has successfully strengthened the quality of education that pupils receive.

The school has fostered pupils' desire to attend regularly and to learn with enthusiasm. Most pupils are keen to succeed. Usually, they show highly positive attitudes in lessons. For example, they engage well with lesson activities and they demonstrate the resilience that they need to stay focused when faced with challenges. Staff confidently step in and guide pupils to refocus on the rare occasions when this is not the case.

Pupils benefit from a suitably ambitious academic and vocational curriculum. In recent years, more pupils are choosing to study a broader and more balanced range of subjects than happened in the past. Subject curriculums are appropriately aspirational and carefully ordered. It is clear what knowledge pupils should learn.

Teachers are well supported to develop their knowledge of the subjects that they teach. Usually, this helps teachers to explain subject content well. Typically, teachers provide meaningful opportunities for pupils to recall, use and apply their knowledge. However, from time to time, some pupils do not complete work that is well matched to the ambition of the curriculum. This affects the progress that some pupils make through subject curriculums.

In lessons, most teachers check that pupils have understood what has been taught. They use information from these checks to address pupils' misconceptions. Some teachers also make effective use of strategies to identify what knowledge pupils know and remember following the completion of a unit of work. However, this practice is mixed. Some teachers do not make sure that pupils' knowledge is secure over a unit of work. This means that the support that some pupils receive to address the gaps in their knowledge is not effective enough.

The published data does not reflect the strengths of the educational offer at this school. In 2023, the progress that some pupils made by the end of Year 11 was below the national average in some subjects. Weaknesses in the previous design and delivery of the curriculum explain why these pupils did not achieve as well as they should. The school has addressed this shortcoming successfully. As a result of the improved curriculum, most current pupils make secure gains in what they know and remember. They are ready for their next steps in education, employment and training.

The school promotes reading well. Staff often model the use of high-quality language in subject lessons. Pupils benefit from a well-connected range of activities which enable them to hear others read, read together and share their reading experiences. These opportunities help pupils to acquire, and confidently use, subject-specific vocabulary in their learning and in their wider reading. Staff carefully identify where pupils, including those at the earliest stage of learning to read, have gaps in their reading knowledge. They ensure that these pupils get the support that they need to read fluently and accurately.

The school works closely with pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to ensure that the needs of these pupils are identified accurately and swiftly. Staff benefit from specialist training so that they feel confident to support these pupils in lessons. This helps most pupils with SEND to learn all that they should.

Pupils benefit from carefully crafted opportunities that enhance their personal development. They understand how to make safe decisions, form positive relationships and embrace difference. As they move through each year group, pupils are introduced to the information and guidance that they need to support their decisions about their future education or career pathway.

The school manages change well. Staff have the time and resources to develop their knowledge and practice. The school engages well with staff. It is quick to identify and address factors that have a negative impact on staff's workload.

The trust works in harmony with members of the local governing body to jointly ensure that they meet their statutory responsibilities. In doing so, they gain a detailed insight into what the school does well and how it could improve further. Together, they provide well-matched support and challenge for the school.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- From time to time, teachers do not ensure that lesson activities match the ambition of the curriculum. When this happens, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, are hampered from acquiring and applying their knowledge as well as they should. The school should ensure that teachers provide pupils with work that enables pupils to learn the content of the curriculum.
- Some teachers do not check well enough how well pupils have learned what has been taught across a unit of work. This means that gaps in knowledge are not identified or addressed. The school should ensure that teachers spot where pupils have not understood or remembered key knowledge so that the support that pupils receive enables them to catch up.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	147683
<b>Local authority</b>	Halton
<b>Inspection number</b>	10294421
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	601
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Julius Weinberg
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Tom Rees
<b>Principal</b>	Sally Jones
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sandymooroa.co.uk">www.sandymooroa.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Sandymoor Ormiston Academy is part of Ormiston Academies Trust.
- Sandymoor Ormiston Academy converted to become an academy in December 2019. When its predecessor school, Sandymoor, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall.
- The academy is registered to provide education across the 11-18 age range. Since the academy opened in December 2020, it has not admitted any students to the sixth form.
- The academy makes use of one unregistered and two registered alternative providers to provide full- and part-time education for a small number of pupils.
- The academy 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

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

- 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 any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal and other senior leaders. They also met with representatives of the academy trust, local governing body and local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, physical education and design and technology. 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.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- 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.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders responsible for SEND and reading. They also looked at information about the support for pupils who have additional needs.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in class and around the school site. They also scrutinised behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils from all year groups and considered the responses of the pupils who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff and considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's Parent View, including the comments received by Ofsted's free-text facility. Inspectors also considered the views of parents and carers that were shared during the inspection.

## Inspection team

Michael Pennington, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Paul Rigby	Ofsted Inspector
Geoff Renwick	Ofsted Inspector
Eleanor Overland	His Majesty's Inspector

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