

Inspection of Melksham Oak Community School

Bowerhill, Melksham, Wiltshire SN12 6QZ

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 October 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	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a growing culture of ambition and raised aspirations at the school. Leaders have established expectations and routines that help pupils to behave. Most pupils respond well to the high expectations that are set for them. Lessons are calm. The atmosphere at social times is organised. Many staff are present to support pupils at these times. Pupils feel safe at school.

Pupils attend a large range of extra-curricular clubs, from knitting to eco-club. Pupils feed back through a forum and leaders listen. A fitness club has now started as a result of pupils' requests. Sixth-form students follow a well-considered and wide enrichment programme, for example learning to make bread. This prepares them for success in their next steps and the opportunity to develop life skills.

Most pupils say that when bullying happens, it is dealt with, yet some pupils feel that it is not always managed as promptly as it could be. A minority of pupils use derogatory language. Pupils say that this is dealt with well by staff. However, some pupils would like leaders to do more to address this. Pupils and staff respect each other.

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

Leaders have planned an ambitious and broad curriculum. Subject leaders have a common approach to planning what pupils will learn and when they will learn it through 'big' questions. In most subjects, leaders have identified the steps of learning pupils need to take. Where this is most successful, pupils can move to the next part of the learning. In some subjects, the smaller steps have not been clearly identified. As a result, pupils do not understand the learning.

Teachers take the same approach to teaching the curriculum. This supports pupils to understand the expectations. Pupils review what they have learned and apply that to new learning. The sixth-form curriculum continues with the same expectations set in key stage 4. As a result, sixth-form students feel well supported in their learning. Pupils receive regular feedback on what they need to do to improve. They have regular opportunities to improve their work. As a result, pupils can see their progress and know what they need to do to get better. The number of pupils studying a language in key stage 4 is rising. Consequently, the proportion of pupils studying the English Baccalaureate is increasing.

Leaders ensure that pupils have access to a wide range of literary texts. There is a wider reading programme for pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4. Even so, a minority of pupils do not value reading and so do not engage with this. Teachers provide a well-managed reading programme for pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read. Leaders put pupils on the right reading programme at the right time. This includes a phonics programme. Teachers who teach reading are well trained.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported. Staff know the individual needs of pupils and understand how best to help them. This support continues throughout the sixth form. Pupils in the key stage 3 nurture group follow the same curriculum. The learning is successfully broken down for pupils, so that they are successful in progressing through the curriculum.

Pupils follow a well-designed curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE). Pupils and students throughout the school have a good understanding of relationships and diversity. Pupils have a strong knowledge of fundamental British values. For example, in voting for the new house system, pupils learned about the democratic process. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to encounter the world of work, including work experience in Year 10. The school meets the requirement of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships. Leaders and staff are aspirational for pupils. A growing number of pupils go on to further education, apprenticeships or employment.

Leaders are mindful of staff workloads. Staff say that they recognise leaders' work to improve this. Nevertheless, leaders do not always use data in an informed way, for example by analysing information to understand trends. As a result, they do not have the information they need to fully inform their actions.

Governors are highly skilled. They hold leaders to account rigorously, ask challenging questions and provide support. Governors and leaders fulfil their statutory duty and have a clear knowledge of where the school is. They know what the priorities are and what needs to happen next.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are vigilant and have a 'no matter is too small' approach to reporting concerns. As a result, there is a secure culture of safeguarding. The safeguarding team has a wide set of skills and training. Its members work with external help to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive the help they need. Leaders keep detailed safeguarding records. Action to support pupils is timely.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe when online. They learn about safeguarding through the PSHE programme. This includes learning about relationships, bullying and managing mental health. Pupils know whom they can talk to if they have a concern.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subject areas, the curriculum has not been planned thoroughly to consider the steps of learning pupils need to take. As a result, pupils do not understand the learning. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum in all subjects is carefully thought through so that teachers are clear about its content and how the pupils' learning informs the next part of the curriculum.
- Leaders have improved behaviour at the school. However, some pupils and staff are concerned about the use of derogatory language among a small group of pupils. Leaders, staff and pupils need to work together to ensure that there is a positive culture of respect.

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	146344
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	10241606
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	1,269
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	136
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ninna Gibson
Principal	Alan Henderson
Website	www.melkshamoak.wilts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the White Horse Federation.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers and five unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets 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.

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 had 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 principal, senior leaders, trustees and other school leaders, including the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, history, technology and religious studies. 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 also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the local governing body, including the chair of governors, and a representative from the trust.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead, examined school records and discussed safeguarding cases.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments from parents and carers. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Rachel Hesketh, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Simon Tong	Ofsted Inspector
Stuart Wilson	Ofsted Inspector
David New	Ofsted Inspector
Gill Hickling	Ofsted Inspector

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