

Inspection of Roundwood Park School

Roundwood Park, Harpenden, Hertfordshire AL5 3AE

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

The headteacher of this school is Alan Henshall. This school is a single academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees chaired by Heather Bayne.

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since May 2019.

What is it like to attend this school?

Roundwood Park School is 'a place to flourish'. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, experience a high quality of education. Pupils meet leaders' exceptionally high expectations for their work, personal development and behaviour. Pupils are happy and say that they feel safe as part of this community.

The broad and ambitious curriculum engages all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school supports pupils to believe in themselves through the highly effective 'ASPIRE' programme. This results in pupils becoming resourceful, reflective, responsible and resilient individuals.

Pupils' experiences at this school are exceptional. They take part in an extraordinary choice of clubs, trips and opportunities, as well as giving to the wider community. These activities broaden pupils' interests, experiences and understanding of the world. They range from sports, chess, music and debating to trips, such as the Year 7 residential trip to Norfolk and a World Challenge trip to Africa. A 'sleep out' overnight helps pupils understand what it is like to be homeless.

Pupils say that this is a school where everyone's differences are accepted and everyone is equal. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They clearly understand the expectations and conduct themselves responsibly. They treat each other and staff with respect.

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

A highly ambitious curriculum is in place for all pupils. A broad and rich curriculum prepares pupils exceptionally well for the next steps in their education, employment or training. As a result, they achieve the very highest outcomes throughout the school.

Subject leaders have outlined precisely what pupils must know and understand. Expert teachers deliver knowledge in small steps, which helps pupils to remember what they have learned. Teachers regularly check what pupils know. Pupils act on teachers' feedback and this helps them to improve. The 'super curriculum' inspires pupils to complete extra learning outside school. They become 'scholars' and wear their scholars' badges with pride.

There is a strong culture of reading in the school. Pupils read a wide variety of texts. Those pupils who struggle to read fluently when they join the school receive the right support to help them build their confidence. This includes help from sixth-form students, who volunteer time to support lessons. Those who struggle to read catch up quickly.

Staff induct pupils expertly into the school and clearly outline the behaviours expected in this community. As a result, excellent behaviour is the norm at the school. For the small number of pupils who struggle with their behaviour, there is

strong pastoral support, which helps them to make changes for the better. Low-level disruption is very rare. Pupils display a strong commitment to their learning. Diversity is important in the school and celebrated by all. Pupils say that 'there is something for everyone here'.

The school provides an impressive range of opportunities, including an extensive leadership programme for pupils. The school has carefully planned for pupils' wider experiences so that they develop the talents and interests of all pupils. The house system is a strength of the school. Students in the sixth form plan and run house activities. They lead on initiatives to improve aspects of the school, such as how to make their community more sustainable. They also deliver the school's tutoring programme for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Sixth-form students are excellent role models for others. Sixth-form students are supported by former students, who provide help for academic subjects and mentoring.

The school provides remarkable support for pupils' personal development. Pupils develop self-confidence and a secure understanding of the world around them. They choose, and raise money for, local, national and global charities. They support a local foodbank and raise money for homeless young people in Hertfordshire. Pupils learn how to look after their physical and mental health.

High-quality careers advice and guidance run through the school's work. Pupils make well-informed decisions about their curriculum, activities and next steps. Students in the sixth form move on to a range of appropriate destinations, including universities, workplaces and apprenticeships.

Staff, including early career teachers, say that they are very well supported. Staff feel valued. They have high praise for how leaders look after staff's well-being and their workload.

Leaders are single-minded in their determination for all pupils to succeed academically and to develop their interests and character. Governors are knowledgeable about key aspects of the school, such as safeguarding. They hold leaders strictly to account for the quality of the school's provision and are highly effective. Leaders have systematically put in place a school of exceptional quality.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	136973
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10267842
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	1,369
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	367
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Heather Bayne
Headteacher	Alan Henshall
Website	www.roundwoodpark.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 May 2009, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- 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

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 the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history, languages and technology. 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 met with the headteacher and members of his team responsible for various areas of the school's work, including SEND, safeguarding, personal development, behaviour, attendance and the sixth-form provision.
- The lead inspector met with five members of the governing body, including the chair of the academy trust.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subjects and visited lessons.
- The lead inspector spoke by phone to a school improvement adviser, who has provided support and guidance for the school.
- Inspectors visited an assembly. They met with several groups of pupils and staff to gather their views on the school. Inspectors also considered the results of the staff and pupil surveys as well as the 258 responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online parental questionnaire.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding arrangements by checking the school's approach to staff recruitment, scrutinising policy documents and meeting with the designated safeguarding lead.

Inspection team

Sue Pryor, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Williams	His Majesty's Inspector
Likhon Muhammad	Ofsted Inspector
Joe Creswick	Ofsted Inspector
Rob James	Ofsted Inspector

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