

Inspection of The Mandeville School

Ellen Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP21 8ES

Inspection dates:	19 and 20 November 2024
The quality of education	Inadequate
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Sixth-form provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The head of school is Sara Durose. This school is part of Insignis Academy 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), Garret Fay, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Gaynor Bull. There is also an executive headteacher, Simon Baker, who is responsible for this school and two others.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school wants the best for pupils and students in the sixth form, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, this ambition has not been realised, particularly in key stages 3 and 4. The achievement of pupils has not improved quickly enough. This is because the school has failed to complete vital elements of curriculum review quickly enough in some subjects. Pupils have experienced a poorly designed curriculum for too long. Consequently, they have gaps in their knowledge and skills. At the end of key stage 4, many pupils, particularly the most disadvantaged, leave school without the qualifications that they need for future education, training or employment.

The behaviour of most pupils is positive because the school's recent improvements are beginning to have an impact. Staff apply the new behaviour management strategies consistently well. Pupils appreciate the new approach to promoting positive behaviour. They feel happy and safe at school. Many pupils told inspectors that they feel cared for by the school. This is particularly true in the small sixth form. Here, students develop strong and positive relationships with staff. This contributes to their stronger achievement by the end of Year 13.

Pupils benefit from a strong offer to promote their wider development. The school has focused on improving many elements of this provision successfully. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum is coherent. It ensures that pupils learn crucial information at the right time. Pupils participate with enthusiasm in the growing number of opportunities to develop their talents and interests.

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

Until recently, an extended period of turbulence in leadership and staffing has hindered the school's attempts to improve the quality of education that it provides for pupils in key stages 3 and 4. However, recent changes and new appointments have begun to bring about positive changes. Although some of these actions are still in their infancy, they indicate that the school has the capacity to improve pupils' learning. The school has an accurate understanding of its weaknesses and is in no doubt about the priorities for the next stage of its journey.

The school's work to review and develop the curriculum across key stages 3 and 4 is ongoing and beginning to address the low number of pupils who gain qualifications in the English Baccalaureate. In most subjects, this work is at a very early stage. In some subjects, the school has not identified fully the crucial information that pupils need to learn and in which order subject content will be taught. In many subjects, pupils have gaps in their knowledge, skills or understanding that have not been addressed. This means that many pupils do not have a strong enough understanding of the subjects that they study. As a result, they are not prepared well enough for the next steps in their education. Published data indicates that, by the end of Year 11, pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, make poor progress and their achievement is significantly below the national average.

This is not the case in the sixth form, where there is a carefully designed programme for students to complete BTEC National Diploma qualifications in sport at a local rugby club. Here, there is much more clarity about what students need to study. Instructors provide effective support for students to learn and remember more.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. In most cases, they present information clearly. However, teachers' checks on pupils' learning are not effective. This means that, in most subjects, teachers do not know how well pupils have remembered crucial information from their prior learning. This hinders teachers from adapting their teaching in subsequent lessons to overcome gaps in pupils' knowledge.

The needs of pupils with SEND are generally identified accurately. 'Pupil passports' provide staff with useful information to support these pupils to access the curriculum. However, staff do not use this information well enough to adapt their teaching to meet pupils' needs in consistently effective ways. Pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they should.

The school has recently improved the quality of the support that pupils who are at the earlier stages of learning to read receive. The new tutor time reading programme is beginning to embed good reading habits among pupils. Younger pupils receive individual guidance from well-trained staff to help them catch up quickly. However, some older pupils do not receive as much help as possible to read with the confidence and fluency they should be able to. Consequently, these pupils struggle to access other areas of the curriculum.

The school has focused on improving the attendance of pupils in Years 7 to 11. However, many of these strategies are new and it is too soon to judge their impact on absence rates. For example, disadvantaged pupils have high rates of persistent absence overall. These pupils regularly miss too much school. The school's actions to address in-school truancy have been largely successful. This means that pupils are typically in lessons on time and ready to learn. However, a small number of pupils are still truanting lessons. Attendance is strong in the sixth form. Students attend regularly and make the most of the opportunities to learn.

The school ensures that pupils' personal development is a priority. Pupils engage positively in the 'Mandeville Mindset', taught through tutor time activities and a coherent assembly programme. PSHE lessons equip pupils with vital knowledge about how to keep themselves safe, including online. They also learn vital age-appropriate sex and relationships education. Expert staff deliver the content of the PSHE curriculum well to pupils in Years 7 to 11. In contrast, sixth-form instructors' subject expertise in this aspect of students' education is not consistently strong enough. This means that the impact of the PSHE curriculum is more variable in the sixth form than it is in the rest of the school.

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, benefit from suitable careers education. This provides them with valuable information to help them make informed choices about their future. However, students in the sixth form do not currently benefit from coherent work experience opportunities. The school is working to rectify this currently.

Previously, the trust has not provided members of the local governing body with sufficient information about the extent of the deficiencies of the school, in order to enable them to provide effective challenge to make the necessary improvements quickly enough. However, recent improvements in the communication of the trust's monitoring and support for the school is beginning to accelerate the rate of improvement. Staff are very positive about the recent improvements to the school. They appreciate the school's consideration of their workload and are keen to help the school continue to improve.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The achievement of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, remains low. As a result, many pupils do not attain the qualifications that they need to progress to their next stages of education, training or employment. The school must ensure that achievement of all pupils improves, and disadvantaged pupils are given access to high-quality education.
- Recent changes to the curriculum have not made enough difference to pupils' achievement in key stages 3 and 4. In some crucial subjects, the school has not identified what should be taught and when this should happen. The school must ensure that its work to develop the curriculum is completed as soon as possible so that pupils gain a secure body of knowledge over time.
- Teachers' checks on pupils' learning do not enable them to know how well pupils learn the curriculum. Furthermore, the gaps in pupils' learning from weaknesses in the curriculum over time are not identified or addressed. As a result, pupils do not gain a secure body of knowledge in the subjects that they study. The school must ensure that teachers accurately identify gaps and misconceptions in pupils' knowledge and then seek to overcome these deficiencies in their subsequent teaching.
- Many pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are absent from school. The number of pupils who are persistently absent from school remains high. Although improving, some pupils truant from lessons in school. Too many pupils, therefore, miss vital learning and are at risk of falling even further behind. The school must ensure that it reviews its current approaches so that attendance improves rapidly, persistent absence decreases, and that in-school truancy is eradicated.

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	148851
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10341904
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	1,002
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	30
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gaynor Bull
CEO of the trust	Garret Fay
Headteacher	Simon Baker (Executive Headteacher) Sara Durose (Head of School)
Website	www.mandeville.bucks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Mandeville School converted to become an academy in January 2022. When its predecessor school, also called The Mandeville School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be requires improvement for overall effectiveness.
- The current head of school took up their post in January 2024.
- There have also been numerous changes to the senior leadership and middle leadership teams recently.
- The school uses one registered and five unregistered alternative providers.
- The school operates across two sites.

- 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. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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, science, modern foreign languages, history and physical education. 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 visited lessons in other subjects and considered the school's work to support disadvantaged pupils.
- The lead inspector met with the executive headteacher and the CEO of the trust. She also met with the chair of the trust and members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors also met with senior leaders and lead practitioners from the trust and the school.
- Inspectors visited the sixth-form provision on both days of the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils and observed their behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime.
- 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.
- The inspectors took account of a range of other information, including the school's development plan, the school's self-evaluation plan, trust review documents, school policies and minutes from meetings of the local governing body.

- The inspectors considered the responses from parents and carers to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also took account of the responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys. They gathered the views of both staff and pupils throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

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