

Inspection of a good school: Futures Institute Banbury

Ruskin Road, Banbury, Oxfordshire OX16 9HY

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 December 2022

Outcome

Futures Institute Banbury continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Each day, pupils come to school eager and ready to learn. They know that working hard is expected and that, by doing so, everyone can achieve. Pupils are keen to talk about their interest and depth of knowledge in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) curriculum. Sixth-form students, in particular, have high aspirations for their future careers, with many planning to be scientists and engineers.

Pupils value the thoughtful and high-quality careers curriculum. A wealth of opportunities are on offer that give pupils a realistic insight into the world of work. This has a particular focus on the employment opportunities available in the local area. Partnerships with different employers help to foster pupils' understanding of their own potential in addressing worldwide problems. Sixth-form students can enthusiastically describe their recent research project with a national automotive manufacturer to explore the issue of renewable fuels and the challenges of hydrogen fuel cells in vehicles.

The individual aspirations and needs of pupils are known and supported. Care and thought are provided daily by staff. Pupils acknowledge that, while bullying is rare, there are occasions where pupils can be unkind. They are, however, very clear that staff deal with any reported incidents sensitively and swiftly.

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

School and trust leaders have high aspirations for their pupils. Time is taken to identify what each pupil wants to achieve, alongside putting in place effective support to help realise this ambition. Staff know this is acutely important for any pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities. Priority is specifically placed on providing useful guidance as pupils join the school. Parents and pupils recognise the value of this, particularly for those pupils who have had missed some of their schooling in a previous education setting. Where needed, bespoke provision is put in place to help these pupils to catch up quickly. This includes interventions to help any pupils who find reading more difficult.

Over recent years, the curriculum has been redesigned and developed to give pupils an ambitious offer that prepares them well for the next stage of their education. Pupils are very positive about the changes that have been made, including the introduction of subjects such as hospitality and catering. Across much of the curriculum, particularly within the STEM subjects, teachers use their knowledge and expertise to inspire and enthuse pupils about their learning. In lessons, teachers ask pupils to recall prior knowledge in order to identify any learning that needs to be revisited. Pupils know that they are expected to reflect upon any feedback they are given to ensure they identify any necessary improvements. However, as yet, this effective practice seen in many subjects is not being implemented consistently. Leaders know this and are putting in place specific support in a small number of subjects to ensure pupils can achieve highly across the full curriculum.

Behaviour around the school is positive and calm. Pupils highlight this as a key reason as to why they enjoy their learning. During lunchtimes, they enjoy time with their friends undertaking different activities such as playing chess. Students in the sixth form are very proud of the contribution they make to the school in providing support and guidance to younger pupils. Alongside this, pupils know the importance of apologising for their behaviour when needed and showing respect to ensure everyone can learn.

The school is highly inclusive. Pupils have a strong understanding of equality and respect, and want to ensure all new pupils feel welcome as soon as they join. The school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum gives pupils opportunities to explore what it means to grow up in modern Britain. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe, including when online. While there is a clear curriculum in place, some pupils are not always able to recollect and articulate what they have learned. Leaders are aware of this and are increasing the opportunities for pupils to discuss and explore aspects of the PSHE curriculum, as well as time to debate current affairs.

Students are exceptionally well supported in formulating plans for their future. They value undertaking the school's Aspiration Employability Diploma. Through this, they develop vital skills that support their achievement in their key stage 5 courses, as well as preparing them for their future careers. This includes becoming more confident in speaking and presenting to different audiences, including employers. Work experience opportunities enhance the careers provision on offer, meaning students are very well prepared for the next stage of their education or employment.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff are knowledgeable and vigilant. Staff are provided with regular training that helps to identify if a pupil may be at risk of harm. Staff report any concerns they may have, confident that leaders will take swift and decisive action. Detailed records ensure that the safeguarding team has up-to-date information about any pupils, and their families, who may need additional help.

Timely referrals are made to external agencies when needed. This includes requests to provide assistance if a pupil needs specialist support with their mental health or well-being.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum is not yet securely and consistently embedded in a small number of subjects. Pupils are therefore not always confident in developing and using the identified knowledge and skills in these subjects, and therefore they do not achieve as highly as they could. Leaders should continue to monitor the full implementation of the curriculum, ensuring staff have the required detailed knowledge and expertise to deliver this effectively.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2017.

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	140886
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10227025
Type of school	Studio School
School category	Academy studio school
Age range of pupils	14 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	141
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	31
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	James Pomeroy
Headteacher	Sylvia Thomas (Executive principal) and Julia Ingham (Head of school)
Website	www.futuresbanbury.org
Date of previous inspection	26 and 27 April 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Aspirations Academies Trust.
- The school shares a campus with Wykham Park. The executive principal and senior leadership team lead both schools. Other staff also teach and provide support across the two provisions.
- The sixth form is a cross-campus provision, where students attend lessons and work with students from Wykham Park.
- A small number of key stage 3 pupils, who are on the school roll of Wykham Park, attend Futures Institute Banbury for the majority of their lessons. These pupils are not in the age range outlined in the school's registration.
- The school does not currently use any 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 educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this 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.
- The lead inspector changed for the second day of inspection.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, staff and pupils. They also spoke with members of the regional governing board, including the chair. An inspector also spoke to the chair of the board of trustees and a representative from the trust.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, mathematics, and hospitality and catering. They discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, teachers and pupils, visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire, including the free-text comments. They also took account of the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys, and gathered the views of both staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors viewed the school's website and policies, met with the designated safeguarding leads, spoke with pupils and staff, checked school records of safeguarding checks carried out on adults working at the school, and spoke with a governor and a trustee.

Inspection team

Aimee Floyd, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Mary Davies, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Richard Carlyle

Ofsted Inspector

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