

Inspection of Elms Bank

Ripon Avenue, Whitefield, Bury, Lancashire M45 8PJ

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 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

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Orienne Langley-Sadler. This school is part of the Oak Learning Partnership 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), James Franklin Smith, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Bernadette Garner.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Elms Bank under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Elms Bank Specialist Arts College to be outstanding, before it opened as Elms Bank as a result of conversion to academy status.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy an abundance of rich and exciting opportunities at this school. The school includes and values every pupil. There is a 'can-do' culture where staff ensure that pupils, no matter what their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are, take a full and active part in school life.

Pupils excel at Elms Bank due to the school's high expectations of them. Staff harness pupils' interests and talents, and nurture these over time. When pupils move into the sixth form, they can undertake vocational courses. For example, some students use their hairdressing skills to help the Year 11 pupils look their best for the school prom. Students are exceptionally well prepared for their next steps when they leave the school.

Pupils are very proud of the school choir. The choir has performed at various venues, including music festivals and theatres, and has also appeared on television. The whole school takes part in an annual school production. Some pupils make props or costumes, others act, sing or dance. All pupils have the opportunity to take part in challenging and exciting activities, such as rock climbing and kayaking on their residential trips.

The school and the trust have ensured that pupils' and staff's well-being lie at the heart of all that they do. Pupils learn to manage their emotions and behaviour. They know how to be good friends, how to say sorry and how to work and play well together. Pupils love their school, and their big smiles show how happy, safe and settled they are.

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

The curriculum is ambitious, and extremely well designed to meet pupils' wide range of needs. Teachers and staff adapt the curriculum to ensure that all pupils engage in learning and achieve highly. Teachers use assessment information well to inform and shape future teaching. They are innovative and creative in their choice of activities, which inspire pupils' curiosity and a love of learning.

Reading is a priority in this school. All pupils enjoy daily reading. Pupils are immersed in a language-rich environment. Staff use their phonic knowledge well to support pupils at the early stage of reading. Pupils gain the knowledge that they need to read for pleasure and to enjoy a wide range of literature.

The school is a calm and happy place. There is a strong focus on rewards and praise. Pupils feel proud of the merits they earn, for example by using good manners, being kind and working well. The weekly assembly celebrates each class and their individual achievements. Pupils behave exceptionally well.

Pupils in the school have a wide range of complex SEND. The school ensures that all staff gain the knowledge and skills they need to understand and support the needs

of all pupils with dignity, care and respect. Education, health and care (EHC) plans are an integral part of pupils' learning. There is a seamless connection between the EHC plans and the school curriculum. This helps pupils to achieve and often exceed their personal EHC plan goals.

The school goes above and beyond to promote and encourage the personal development of pupils. Pupils learn about physical as well as mental health. They know how to stay safe online and understand what factors contribute to a positive relationship. The school consulted widely with the local community, including with all faith sectors, to inform and develop the relationships and sex education curriculum. This has ensured that pupils receive the right information at the right time that they need to keep themselves safe.

The school has a robust and highly effective careers programme that links seamlessly with the work to prepare pupils for adulthood. In the sixth form, there is a strong focus on students developing independence and life skills. Students undertake vocational courses in catering, hair and barbering, horticulture and sport. They also take part in work experience placements in a variety of professions. The internship programme based in a local hospital is well established and successful. Students have secured paid employment or voluntary work in a number of roles within the hospital and the community, including in retail work, catering and administration.

Trustees have ensured that there is challenge and accountability at all levels of management. A board of governors holds leaders to account effectively. The trust has developed an outreach team to work with local schools outside of the trust to share expertise around SEND.

The school makes sure that it considers the workload and well-being of staff when it makes decisions or introduces change. Staff feel valued and well supported to carry out their roles effectively.

The school has developed strong partnerships with parents and carers to ensure that pupils attend school regularly and achieve the best possible outcomes.

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	146891
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	10290348
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	346
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	77
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Bernadette Garner
CEO of trust	James Franklin Smith
Headteacher	Orienne Langley-Sadler
Website	www.elmsbank.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Elms Bank converted to become an academy school in April 2019. When its predecessor school, Elms Bank Specialist Arts College, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school is part of the Oak Learning Partnership Trust.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- The sixth-form students attend the Elms Bank College Hub on Bury Old Road in Prestwich.
- The school caters for a wide range of SEND including: visual impairment; hearing impairment; speech, language and communication; autistic spectrum disorder; social, emotional and mental health; multi-sensory impairment; physical disability;

moderate learning difficulty; severe learning difficulty; and profound and multiple learning difficulty.

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 met with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, the CEO of the trust, trust members, including the chair, and members of the governing body. Inspectors also spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication, reading and English; mathematics; the creative curriculum; and personal, health, social and economic 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 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 also looked at a range of documentation, spoke to some parents, spoke to pupils and spoke with staff about the school. Inspectors also considered the views of parents expressed through Ofsted Parent View. They also considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

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Ofsted Inspector

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His Majesty's Inspector

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