

Woodland Middle School Academy

Inspection report

Unique reference number	136560
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	382234
Inspection dates	11–12 July 2012
Lead inspector	James Coyle

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	589
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mandy Wilsmore
Headteacher	Jeff Conquest
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2009
School address	Malham Close Flitwick MK45 1NP
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Age group	9–13
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Introduction

Inspection team

James Coyle Additional Inspector

Keith Brown Additional Inspector

Christine Heppleston Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 20 lessons taught by 20 teachers, the majority of which were jointly observed with members of the school's senior leadership team. Inspectors also made brief visits to three other lessons and attended a school production. They scrutinised pupils' work and held meetings with groups of pupils. Inspectors met with members of the governing body, staff, partner lower and upper schools' headteachers, and conducted a telephone interview with the school's improvement adviser. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online (Parent View) survey in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at school documents, policies and procedures relating to the safeguarding of pupils, self-evaluation records and assessment information including a recent external analysis of school performance. The inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires from staff, pupils and 396 parents and carers.

Information about the school

The school is an average-sized middle school. It serves pupils living in Flitwick and the surrounding areas of Central Bedfordshire. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with very few from other heritages. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well-below average but rising. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The school converted to become an academy in April 2011. The school is a member of the Redborne Schools' Partnership, which helps coordinate education for young people in the area from age three to 19.

Among its awards, the school has Eco-Schools, Secondary Geography Quality Mark, Values Education Quality Mark, Sportsmark and Healthy School awards.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It shows marked improvements since the last inspection. Pupils achieve well throughout this values-based school, which unites the school community in common purpose and mutual respect. It is not yet outstanding because teaching does not ensure outstanding achievement over time for all pupils and middle leaders lack opportunity to have more impact on raising teaching quality.
- Overall pupils' progress is good, especially in Years 7 and 8. Pupils' attainment in all subjects is regularly above the levels expected nationally by the time they leave school. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also make good progress.
- Teaching is good. Effective planning, assessment and feedback to learners produce well-structured lessons that motivate pupils to learn. Strong pupil-teacher relationships foster learning well. In the few lessons where teaching is satisfactory, too much teacher direction slows the pace of learning or work is not closely matched enough to the needs and abilities of the pupils. In the best lessons, teachers challenge pupils to think independently.
- Pupils' behaviour and respect for others in class and around the school are good. Pupils recognise that there is freedom from bullying and that they are safe in school and their parents and carers agree. Rigorous and robust action by the school has led to a steady increase in attendance, which is now above average.
- Leadership and management are good, combining a shared vision with effective practical strategies to manage performance. Senior leaders know the school's strengths and accurately identify areas for development. They take prompt action to redress weaknesses in teaching and pupils' achievement and monitor progress closely. The school's good curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By the end of next academic year, accelerate progress and raise attainment by ensuring teachers always:
 - set work that is closely matched to pupils' needs and abilities
 - ensure pace and challenge are provided throughout lessons
 - provide opportunities for pupils' independent learning.
- By December 2012, extend opportunities for middle leaders to observe lessons, share best practice and feed back to teachers on how they might improve their practice.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' achievement is good. They enter the school in Year 5 with a wide range of prior attainment, but it is broadly equivalent to that generally found in pupils of this age. Pupils in recent years have attained average results in English and mathematics in Year 6 national tests. However, their progress in Years 5 and 6 is improving due to well-focused interventions by the school. In 2012, provisional English and mathematics test scores are above average. In Years 7 and 8, the rate of progress increases for all pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and those eligible for free school meals. By the time they leave in Year 8, pupils' attainment is above that usually found nationally at this age in English, mathematics and science, as evidenced by secure, externally marked assessments. In their results pupils were achieving above the national average of Year 9 pupils in 2011. Inspection findings are endorsed by the vast majority of parents and carers who believe that their children are making good progress. Pupils also share this view.

In lessons observed, pupils displayed a keenness and enthusiasm for learning, taking instruction and settling quickly to the task in hand. In science, in art and design and in technology, pupils organised working groups, set up equipment and, when using machine tools, applied appropriate health and safety measures. Discussion with high-attaining pupils revealed that studying the GCSE thinking and reasoning course is helping them in many subjects, including science where they are able to apply analytical skills to produce work more quickly and to a higher standard. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are closing the attainment gap on all pupils nationally. This is because work is closely matched to their ability levels and teaching assistants are deployed effectively. Staff support pupils well by providing both challenge and encouragement. Teaching assistants also demonstrate skills precisely and teach subject-specific vocabulary.

A strong culture of reading is evident and pupils are expected to renew reading books on a regular basis. Pupils who read aloud to inspectors, including disabled pupils and some with special educational needs, showed determination and obvious enjoyment, by reading with confidence, accuracy and fluency. Pupils' attainment in

reading and writing is broadly average, but improving, at the end of Year 6, and above national expectations by the time they leave Year 8.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is good. In most lessons, teachers' good subject knowledge and planning of learning lead to carefully structured work with clear, focused expectations of what pupils are to achieve. Pupils respond well to questions with responses that reveal understanding, opinions and ideas for improving their work. In the few lessons where teaching is only satisfactory, the challenge and pace of learning are slower. This situation limits progress because some learning is too teacher directed, or the teacher does not check carefully enough if pupils are finding the work too easy or too difficult. Where teaching is outstanding, a very high level of challenge is provided and frequent opportunities are found for pupils' independent learning.

Teachers are aware of how pupils can be helped to respond to challenge through well-designed tasks applied to learning. In outstanding practice in mathematics using a dart board, Year 8 pupils set to derive doubles and triples of numbers from one to 20 were asked to work out how many ways there are of getting a nine-dart finish. The resulting responses revealed basic number skills being practised expertly, and full explanations of calculations needed to reach the answers. Outstanding teaching was also evident as a result of the high quality singing, dancing and acting in the observed Lion King production. Good planning of the curriculum supports teaching effectively and provides frequent opportunities for teachers to stress the importance and enhance pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers often use examples from the real world to illustrate the values the school holds, and these contribute effectively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Work set is carefully modified for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and enables them to achieve well.

A range of informative assessment techniques are used, including teachers' ongoing questioning of pupils' understanding at regular points during the lesson, and different types of peer assessment. Good assessment practice was exemplified in a Year 7 textiles lesson where a range of planning sheets and finished hats, each with a description of how and why they had reached a certain level, enabled pupils to quickly gain an understanding of how to improve their work to reach the higher level. Marking of pupils' work is of a high standard, giving National Curriculum levels, corrections and advice on how to improve. A strong culture of teaching of reading is evident and all pupils are expected to bring reading books to school, log their reading and exchange books regularly. Pupils spoke about the individual support they had received to help and challenge them to improve their reading. Parents, carers and pupils express a good deal of satisfaction with the quality of teaching at the school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is consistently good and this is endorsed by the large majority of parents and carers. This is a well-ordered and safe school where pupils understand and embrace the values system that emphasises tolerance, respect, fairness and

unity. Pupils arrive promptly to classes and have a positive attitude towards their learning. They respond well to instructions, work safely in groups with equipment and waste little time. The clear, fair system of rewards and consequences is effective and school records show the success of behaviour management over time. Attendance is above average, with persistent absence and exclusions very low.

Pupils are well aware of different forms of bullying, having undertaken an effective programme that includes lessons on homophobic bullying, cyber bullying and an 'anti-bullying week'. In discussion with inspectors, pupils revealed that they encounter occasional physical jostling and name calling, which the school quickly deals with. Consequently, they are confident about reporting any incidents should they occur. Pupils, parents and carers endorse inspection findings that the school is a safe place.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good. There is a shared approach based on improvement planning, rigorous self-review and self-improvement that unifies the governing body and school leaders in their high expectations for the school. They extend the vision, locally, to the Redborne Schools' Partnership. Senior leaders effectively monitor school performance and the quality of teaching on a regular basis. Pupils' progress is tracked well towards challenging targets, deploying support where appropriate if underachievement is identified. Such good practice puts promotion of equality of opportunity at the heart of the school's work. The school is inclusive and there is no evidence of discrimination.

Training of staff to make learning more exciting, practical and challenging has transformed it for many pupils. The focus on the impact of teaching on learning has been a priority for performance management, which has helped to change didactic teaching to ensure more exciting, varied learning styles. As part of its self-improvement cycle, the school is beginning to provide more opportunities for middle leaders to observe lessons, share best practice and feed back to teachers on how they might improve. This practice is too recent for the impact on teaching and learning to be accurately evaluated.

The good curriculum caters for the learning needs and aspirations of pupils. It systematically builds on pupils' prior learning. The curriculum also helps to prepare pupils well for the next stage of their lives, enabling them to develop into thoughtful, responsible and mature young adults. Pupils undertake a good range of activities during the year, such as a Mardi Gras day, charity day and a trip to an East London school, which revealed differences in the environments in which the schools are located. These activities also support pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development well.

The governing body supports and challenges school leaders well and has clear understanding of the strengths of the school and the priorities for development. Governors also have effective systems to ensure that the robust arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements. Good leadership practice, a strong track record of improvements since the last inspection, good achievement and pupils'

positive attitudes to learning illustrate the school's capacity to improve further.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



13 July 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woodland Middle School Academy, Flitwick, MK45 1NP

Thank you for welcoming us when we recently visited your school. We enjoyed our time with you. A special thank you goes to those of you who performed for us in *The Lion King* production and shared your thoughts with us through questionnaires and in conversations. Your views have been very helpful.

We think your school is providing you with a good education. You have good leaders and managers. Teaching is good and leads to your making good progress and reaching standards that are a good basis for your work in your next school. Your attendance rate is higher than in most middle schools. You behave well in lessons and around the school. You told us that you are happy and feel safe at school. You are gaining a wide range of skills which are preparing you very well for the future. At the same time, you are caring, thoughtful and aware members of your school community.

Your headteacher, staff and governors want your school to become even better. We have asked the headteacher to make sure that teachers always set work that is closely matched to your needs and abilities, give pace and challenge to your learning and provide more opportunities for you to learn independently. We also want subject leaders to help teachers to share best practice and feedback to each other on how they might improve.

You can help by continuing to come to school every day, working hard and trying your best. Please check your work carefully and tell your teachers if you need them to explain any of it in more detail.

I wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

James Coyle
Lead inspector

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