

Alameda Middle School

Station Road, Ampthill, Bedford, MK45 2QR

Inspection dates 19–20 November 2013

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Not previously inspected | |
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils attain well in English, mathematics and other subjects and make good progress as they proceed through the school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers.
- Pupils make good progress in reading due to its widespread development across all subjects along with the pupils' own enthusiasm for using the well-stocked library.
- Teaching is usually good and sometimes outstanding.
- Pupils have highly positive attitudes to learning and their behaviour across the school is almost always impeccable.
- Pupils feel safe and their parents agree. Safeguarding and child protection arrangements are highly effective.
- High attendance ensures pupils make the most of the time available to them for learning.
- The acting headteacher, acting deputy headteachers and governing body are effectively implementing clear plans for improving teaching and attainment.
- Teachers responsible for leading different subjects within the school are effectively developing their roles to ensure teaching continues to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding. Opportunities to share best practice are increasing but are not yet regular enough.
- Pupils do not always understand how to improve their work or respond to guidance given.
- Subject leaders' checking on the quality of learning is developing well but is occasionally inconsistent.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 26 lessons taught by 22 staff, including observations carried out jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- The inspection team held meetings with the acting headteacher and 2 acting deputy headteachers, governors, staff, the school improvement adviser and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the 78 responses on the Parent View website and also analysed 42 staff questionnaire responses.
- Inspectors observed the school's work. They looked at the school's improvement plan, self-evaluation, data on pupils' attainment and progress, a range of policies, arrangements for safeguarding pupils, monitoring procedures, records of behaviour and attendance and governing body documentation.
- Pupils' books were examined both in lessons and in a separate work sample with senior staff.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading.

Inspection team

Robin Sidaway, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Michael Sutherland-Harper

Additional Inspector

Gillian Scobie

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized middle school. The very large majority of the pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below the national average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is below average. This is additional government funding for particular groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals or in local authority care.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Alameda Middle School converted to become an academy school on 1st August 2011. When its predecessor school, Alameda Middle School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The school has an acting headteacher and 2 acting deputy headteachers. The new headteacher will take up her post in January 2014.
- The school is in a loose pyramid federation with one other local middle school and one local upper school. The headteacher of the local upper school, who is a national leader of education, works closely with the school to ensure effective transition arrangements.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of all teaching to good or outstanding by:
 - identifying and sharing existing best practice in classroom skills across all lessons
 - ensuring that marking and assessment procedures always identify next steps that pupils need to take to improve their work
 - checking that pupils respond promptly to teachers' written guidance.
- Ensure that subject leaders' checking and evaluation of pupils' progress and attainment now develop consistently to the very highest of standards.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment on entry is above the level expected nationally and has been for some time. English is slightly stronger than mathematics.
- Pupils make good progress as they move through the school so that by the end of Key Stage 2 in 2012, their attainment at Level 4 and Level 5 in English and mathematics was considerably above the national average.
- Between 2011 and 2012, there was an increase in the proportion of pupils making expected progress in English, and in mathematics the proportion remained approximately the same; in both subjects in 2012 the proportions were above national figures.
- 2013 progress rates dipped in English and in mathematics as a result of variations in teaching quality which the school has quickly addressed. On the basis of data currently available, results in 2014 are expected to return to their previously high level.
- Progress and attainment continue at a high level throughout Years 7 and 8 (Key Stage 3) in both English and mathematics and are reflected in pupils' subsequent progress, as confirmed by the headteacher of the linked upper school.
- More able pupils make good progress because learning is carefully adjusted to encourage them to develop their investigative skills in and beyond the classroom.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium make similar progress to their peers and sometimes exceed it. They are currently two terms behind in mathematics and slightly less so in English, but the gap is closing rapidly. Both the pupil premium funding and the Year 7 catch-up premium ensure that literacy and numeracy develop well because of one to one and small group support.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers because their needs are quickly analysed and support is tailored to their individual needs.
- Pupils make very good progress in reading because the school has provided excellent facilities. For example, a highly stimulating range of books and displays in the library ensure that a very large number of pupils spend every lunch hour reading. Frequent reading in class, including reading aloud, means that there is little need for the reinforcement of sounds and letters.
- As a result of good teaching across the school, including an innovative approach to linking topics in geography, history and English, pupils make good progress in foundation subjects.
- Pupils say that they enjoy school because teachers help them to believe that they can achieve almost anything.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching seen during the inspection was usually good or better. A very small number of lessons seen required improvement or were inadequate. All observations carried out with senior leaders during the inspection resulted in agreed grades. The profile of teaching seen by the inspectors matched the school's own record of lesson observations.

- Where teaching was most effective, teachers had strong subject knowledge and demonstrated activities well to ensure pupils could proceed to high quality next steps. Teachers made good use of questions and adjusted tasks in lessons to ensure that very strong responses from pupils continued.
- In a Year 8 art lesson, the teacher focused carefully on the progress pupils made over time and ensured it increased by using stimuli such as a visit to the Henry Moore Foundation to encourage high quality outcomes.
- Pupils have good opportunities to work independently and in smaller groups because most teachers ensure that activities are equally shared between them and the pupils. As a result, pupils engage well with activities in the full range of subjects.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported because teachers and teaching assistants work well together in lessons to meet their needs. Small group activities are conducted with good pace and there are clear expectations that pupils will reach higher levels.
- More able pupils are encouraged in lessons by open-ended tasks such as imagining what it was like to be in the trenches in the First World War and then making an appropriate response through creating a descriptive poem.
- Literacy and numeracy are well taught. Most teachers link other subjects to these two areas. In a Year 5 history lesson the teacher emphasised that the way pupils expressed themselves was crucial to their success in representing historical facts on one side of an argument.
- Self and peer assessment is well developed; for example, during a physical education lesson, basketball shooting was videoed in order that pupils could identify areas that they could improve individually against key assessment criteria.
- Marking and assessment by teachers are regular. Presentation of pupils' work is generally neat. However, teachers are inconsistent in indicating the next steps for pupils to take in order to improve their work. In most, but not all cases, pupils follow up on written comments made by teachers in their books.
- Sharing of best practice in classroom skills is developing but is still inconsistent.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils work consistently well; they enjoy their lessons and display a love of learning. For example, in a Year 8 information and communications technology lesson, pupils were keen to explain the websites they were designing and the processes they were using. They were very keen to move on with their work, which was exciting them.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and display a readiness to expand their horizons, as shown clearly by their commitment to reading. The library is used as an excellent resource and is often full at lunchtime with pupils exchanging books or reading quietly.
- All members of staff have consistent, high expectations of behaviour. Pupils are fully aware of the rewards and sanctions associated with good or poor behaviour, as exemplified by the

'consequences staircase' that is displayed widely throughout the school.

- Pupils feel safe in school and the vast majority of their parents agreed on the online survey and through the school's own parental surveys.
- Pupils' behaviour across the school is almost always impeccable. During the inspection, they responded very quickly and responsibly to adverse weather conditions at the beginning of break and made sure that everyone was able to move inside promptly and safely.
- Pupils are fully aware of the different forms of bullying. Inspectors were impressed by a series of posters in the school hall, one for each year group, which every pupil has signed as part of the school's anti-bullying week.
- Attendance is high and has been so over time. Exclusions are well below national figures. The school has detailed systems in place to ensure that whenever pupils do not attend, follow up is quick and effective. Parents are fully involved in this monitoring process. Pupils are punctual to lessons.

The leadership and management are good

- The acting headteacher, senior leadership team and governors have a shared vision of a continually improving school. They have accurately identified those areas of teaching and achievement that require improvement to reach the very highest standards. Their self-evaluation is accurate.
- Teachers benefit from a range of professional development opportunities which the school has put in place through their loose federation, for example, to ensure the accurate moderation of pupils' work.
- Performance management procedures are rigorous and developing to meet the needs of both the teaching staff and the non-teaching staff.
- The range of subjects taught across the school is broad, balanced and under constant review. The themes covered in lessons encourage pupils to carry out further research and ensure that their attitudes to learning are very positive. There is high extra-curricular participation in a wide range of areas including PE and music.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is well developed as shown for example by the commitment of the school council to improving the school. Regular opportunities to reinforce literacy are well embedded across all year groups, but slightly less well developed in numeracy.
- The school has drawn up a clear programme for the allocation of funding for PE development in conjunction with local providers. This includes opportunities for pupils to access a wide range of sports and aims to look at sustaining physical and health development over time.
- The school improvement adviser has worked closely with the school, supporting the senior leadership team in the interim period before the new headteacher takes up her post, assisting the work of the governing body and improving the rigour of monitoring.
- Subject leaders are focused on more closely checking and evaluating the progress and attainment of pupils in their area of learning. However, some inconsistencies remain in their

approach.

- Safeguarding procedures and child protection arrangements are highly effective and meet all current requirements.
 - The school works closely with the local upper school to ensure effective transition arrangements and shares an analysis of data to track subsequent success
 - Links with parents are good. The school is seeking to develop parents' role in reinforcing the work of the school.
 - The school's capacity for sustained improvement is good because the senior leadership team and the governing body work in effective collaboration and have correctly identified the areas for improvement; their self-evaluation is accurate.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governors visit the school regularly and have identified where teaching is best as a result. They have undertaken training to improve their analysis of data and ensure they have a good understanding of the pupils' achievement. Governors provide effective challenge and support and have agreed with senior leaders that the next steps for the school are to improve the quality of all teaching to at least good or outstanding and maintain achievement at consistently high levels. They have a good understanding of how performance management of staff is linked to target setting, support and progression through pay scales. They delayed the appointment of the new headteacher until they had found the appropriate candidate, all the while recognising the good leadership skills which have resulted in the development of the current senior leadership team.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
|---------|----------------------|--|
| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Unique reference number | 137249 |
| Local authority | Central Bedfordshire |
| Inspection number | 429625 |

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

| | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Type of school | Middle deemed secondary |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 9–13 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 596 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mark Watchorn |
| Headteacher | James Adkins (Acting) |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Telephone number | 01525 750900 |
| Fax number | 01525 750901 |
| Email address | schooloffice@alameda.beds.sch.uk |

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

