

Sandye Place Academy

Park Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 1JD

Inspection dates

30 April–1 May 2014

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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress across year groups and in most subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are well prepared for upper school.
- Almost all groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and the most-able pupils, make good progress.
- Teaching is good. Most teachers plan work which is interesting and challenging, and which captures pupils' interests and enthusiasm very well.
- Teachers use the information that they have about pupils' levels of attainment well. This ensures that work is usually hard enough for pupils but not too hard.
- Adults and pupils get on well together. Pupils enjoy their lessons and the vast majority have good attitudes to learning.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils feel safe and have a good understanding of safety issues.
- Leaders and managers have successfully ensured that teaching and achievement are good and continue to improve. They have an accurate understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. They have ensured that all staff have high quality training.
- Governors effectively challenge and support the academy. Consequently they are effective in ensuring that teaching, achievement and behaviour are good.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Mathematics teaching in Year 5 and Year 6 is not as good as it is in other year groups.
- Occasionally teachers' marking does not help pupils to improve their work.
- Sometimes pupils are not moved on to harder work as soon as they are ready.
- Leaders do not always make sure that any slowing of the progress of groups of pupils is quickly identified.
- They do not identify checkpoints through the year to be sure that what they are doing to improve the school is working.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 22 lessons, eight of which were jointly observed with one of the senior leaders. The inspection team also made several short visits to other lessons to check on the progress and behaviour of different groups of pupils.
- Meetings were held with three groups of pupils from all year groups. Other meetings were held with members of the governing body and with senior leaders and staff, including those responsible for leading subjects. The lead inspector held a meeting with a consultant who works with the academy.
- One inspector listened to pupils reading.
- Inspectors analysed the 98 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also analysed a questionnaire that the academy uses.
- Inspectors observed the work of the academy and looked at a number of documents, including those relating to the monitoring of teaching and the targets set for teachers to improve their work. They also looked at records relating to attendance, behaviour, bullying and safeguarding, the school's improvement plan and data on pupils' progress.

Inspection team

Richard Sutton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sa'ad Khaldi

Additional Inspector

Heather Housden

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school (although the academy is a middle school, it is deemed to be a secondary school).
- The large majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic heritages is well below average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium, which is additional funding given to schools for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Sandye Place Academy converted to become an academy school in April 2011. When its predecessor school, Sandye Place Middle School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and raise achievement, by:
 - making sure that marking is always effective in helping pupils to improve their work and that the improvements are checked by teachers
 - moving pupils on to harder work as soon as they are ready
 - making the most of opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Improve the impact that leaders and managers, including governors, have on achievement and teaching by:
 - analysing the progress that pupils make in more detail so that any underachievement of particular groups of pupils of similar ability can be tackled quickly
 - making sure that mathematics teaching in Year 5 and Year 6 is as strong as it is in other year groups
 - ensuring that the school improvement plan and the plans produced by departments contain clear targets for improving teaching and achievement at regular points throughout the year.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils make good progress across year groups in most subjects because they benefit from good and sometimes outstanding teaching. By the time pupils reach Year 8 they are well prepared for upper school because the vast majority of pupils achieve above average levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science.
- In 2013, achievement in the Key Stage 2 tests dipped, particularly in mathematics. However, the academy has responded rapidly to this drop in standards. It is using the Year 7 'catch-up' funding, which is provided to support pupils below the expected levels in English and mathematics, effectively to provide additional staff so that eligible pupils can benefit from one-to-one tuition. Pupils are catching up quickly in both subjects though progress is more rapid in English than it is in mathematics. Pupils in Year 6 this year are making good progress and they are on track to achieve well in the tests.
- Pupils join the academy in Year 5 with levels of attainment that are below average. The academy has effective ways of assessing pupils when they join to check their levels of attainment so that teaching can be accurately matched to the pupils' skills and abilities. The above average attainment by the end of Year 8 represents good progress through the school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because teachers have a detailed understanding of these pupils' particular needs. The small proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language and those from ethnic minority backgrounds also make good progress in most subjects.
- The most able pupils make similarly good progress because teachers make sure that work is appropriately challenging.
- Pupils make very good progress in reading and the academy is successfully helping pupils to read widely and regularly. Achievement in writing is also good and improving because pupils have opportunities to develop their skills across all subjects. In mathematics progress is much faster in Years 7 and 8 than it is in the lower year groups, though this is improving.
- The academy spends its additional pupil premium funding effectively. For example, pupils benefit from working in small groups when they need additional support. Pupils supported by the pupil premium in all year groups and of all abilities usually make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, though there is some variability. In 2013, Year 6 pupils supported through the pupil premium achieved levels in reading and writing which were one and a half terms behind other pupils and in mathematics eligible pupils were almost a year behind. These differences are narrowing as a result of the academy's greater focus on this group of pupils.
- The academy has used the additional primary sport funding very effectively. For example, it has purchased new gymnastics equipment which is resulting in pupils achieving higher levels of attainment. In addition, pupils benefit from a wider range of competitive sport with other schools and a higher proportion of pupils than previously attend extra-curricular sport clubs. As a result, pupils are developing a strong understanding of the importance of a healthy life style and physical wellbeing.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good and in some areas it is outstanding. Pupils enjoy lessons because teachers are

skilled in planning activities which interest and motivate pupils. As a result, pupils have good attitudes to learning and they work hard and are motivated to do well.

- Pupils of all abilities make good progress because teachers effectively use assessment information about pupils' levels of attainment to plan work that is pitched at the right level for pupils, including the most-able pupils. However, sometimes, teachers do not always ensure that pupils move on to more challenging work when they are ready, which occasionally results in slower progress.
- The teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good because teachers have an accurate understanding of pupils' particular needs and they make sure that pupils receive an appropriate level of support as well as challenge. Teaching assistants effectively support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs both in class and when they work with them in small groups. Teaching assistants often ask probing questions which require pupils to think hard.
- Marking is usually effective because it helps pupils to improve their work and show that they have learnt from any mistakes that they have made. However, sometimes marking is not as helpful as it should be or teachers do not check that pupils have acted on improvements that they have suggested. This sometimes means that some pupils make slower progress.
- Teachers help pupils to use and develop their reading and writing skills well in all subjects. They also help pupils to develop their mathematical skills in many subjects such as science and technology but sometimes they do not make the most of these opportunities. This means that mathematical skills are not always developed as well as they should be.
- Teaching in mathematics is good, overall. Although it is improving strongly, mathematics teaching in years 5 and 6 is not as good as it is in years 7 and 8 because it does not always capture pupils' interests.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. The vast majority are polite, courteous and well mannered.
- Pupils appreciate the good teaching that they receive as well as the very high quality of personal support and guidance when it is needed. Relationships throughout the academy are positive and these make a significant contribution to good learning. As a result, pupils have good attitudes to learning and they work hard. Only very occasionally do these standards slip, when pupils are taught by supply teachers because their regular teacher is away.
- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The academy fulfils statutory responsibilities regarding safeguarding: all staff have been checked as required and are trained appropriately to keep pupils safe and free from harm. Pupils have a good understanding of safety-related issues including how to keep safe when working online.
- Bullying is rare at the academy and as a result, pupils feel safe. Pupils have a good understanding of the various forms in which bullying can occur and they are confident that when bullying incidents do happen, staff will deal with matters quickly and effectively.
- The academy has successfully improved attendance for almost all groups of pupils this year. The number of pupils who regularly miss school has decreased considerably.

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal, very well supported by the team of senior leaders, has successfully ensured that the vast majority of staff have high expectations of themselves and pupils. Consequently, teaching and achievement are good and improving.
- The targets set for teachers to help them improve their work and guide decisions about pay increases are effective and these make a good contribution to raising achievement and the quality of teaching.
- The leadership of teaching is good. Teachers benefit from a wide range of very good professional development opportunities which are tailored to their individual needs and support them in meeting their targets.
- The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' good achievement and behaviour because it is well matched to pupils' interests and it promotes their personal development effectively. An extensive range of visits to museums, art galleries and places of worship as well as a wide range of very well attended after-school clubs help pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding very well. A particular feature of the academy is the work pupils are enthusiastically involved in on 'sustainable futures'.
- In recent years mathematics teaching has not been as strong as other subjects. Leaders have tackled underperformance in this subject and succeeded in ensuring that achievement and teaching is good. However, they are aware that more needs to be done to ensure that teaching and achievement in Year 5 and Year 6 is as good as it is in other year groups.
- Leaders and managers, including those responsible for year groups and subjects, have good skills which help them to check teaching, achievement and behaviour effectively. They provide a good level of challenge and support for teachers and so any identified underperformance is tackled quickly. However, the system which is used to track and analyse achievement does not always help leaders to identify any underachievement of particular groups, for example groups of pupils of similar ability.
- The school improvement plan and subject plans are well focused on the most important areas for improvement. However, the plan does not identify interim targets for checking that teaching and achievement are rising at various points throughout the year. This means that any strategies that are not having a quick enough effect can be overlooked until the end of the year, and continuous improvement is not ensured.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has an accurate understanding of the academy's strengths and areas for further development. Governors have the skills required to interpret pupils' achievement data and they provide a good level of support and challenge to the school. As a result, the governing body has been influential in making sure that teaching, achievement and behaviour and safety are good and continue to improve.
 - The governing body knows how the additional pupil premium, Year 7 'catch up' and primary sport funding is used. Governors are aware of the good impact that this funding is having because they check this appropriately.
 - Governors know about the quality of teaching and the management of staff performance, and they are appropriately involved in setting guidelines and making decisions about whether teachers should receive pay rises in relation to meeting their targets. They are aware of how staff underperformance is tackled and have appropriate procedures in place should this be necessary.

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	136541
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	443990

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	498
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Greener
Principal	Kim McCamley
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01767 680420
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