

Fulbrook Middle School

Weathercock Lane, Woburn Sands, Milton Keynes, MK17 8NP

Inspection dates 17–18 September 2014

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Not previously inspected | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| | This inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Leadership and management | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- In Key Stage 2, no groups of pupils, including the most able and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make consistently good progress, particularly in reading and writing.
- Teaching is too variable because pupils are not always required to think hard and move on to harder work as soon as they are ready.
- Marking and feedback do not always help pupils to improve their work.
- Leaders, including those responsible for subjects, do not check teaching and achievement in sufficient detail and regularly enough so that they can quickly tackle any weaknesses.
- The targets which are set for teachers to improve their work are not always effective.
- The academy improvement plan does not always contain clear targets. This means that the academy cannot accurately check on its effectiveness throughout the year.
- The governing body does not hold the academy to account as well as it should because it has not made sure that it regularly receives appropriately detailed information about teaching and pupils' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- In Key Stage 3, the progress that many pupils make is faster than it is in Key Stage 2 in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, because teaching is usually good.
- By the time disadvantaged pupils reach Year 8, most have caught up with their classmates in mathematics and reading.
- Those pupils who do not attain the expected levels by the end of Year 6 in English or mathematics catch up well in Year 7.
- Behaviour across the academy is good and pupils are well mannered.
- Pupils have a strong understanding of how to keep safe because the academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- The curriculum is well planned so that pupils are able to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 20 lessons, eight of which were jointly observed with 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. Inspectors looked at a wide range of different groups of pupils' work in their books.
- 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.
- Inspectors analysed the 82 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspection team 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 academy's improvement plan and data on pupils' progress.

Inspection team

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Richard Sutton, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Robert Ridout | Additional Inspector |
| Rosemarie McCarthy | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- Fulbrook Middle School converted to become an academy school on 1 March 2012. When its predecessor school, also called Fulbrook Middle School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- 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).
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much lower than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged 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 well below average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and raise achievement, particularly in reading and writing in Key Stage 2, so that they are consistently good or better by:
 - making sure that marking is always effective in helping pupils to improve their work
 - moving pupils on to harder work as soon as they are ready
 - using effective questions which require pupils to think hard.
- Improve the impact that all leaders have on teaching and achievement, including governors and those who are responsible for subjects, by making sure that:
 - the progress of all groups of pupils and the quality of teaching in all year groups are regularly checked in appropriate detail so that leaders can quickly tackle any weaknesses
 - the academy improvement plan contains clear targets for improved teaching and achievement at regular points throughout the year
 - the targets which are set for teachers to help them improve their work are always precise in stating how teaching needs to improve.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders at all levels – including senior leaders, governors and those responsible for subjects – do not have as much impact as they should on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- While leaders use assessment information to check the progress of individual pupils, they do not check and analyse the achievement of different groups of pupils – for example, pupils of similar ability – in all year groups in enough detail and as regularly as they should. Similarly, the checks which are made on the quality of teaching are not sufficiently detailed or frequent enough. As a result, teaching and achievement, particularly in reading and writing in Key Stage 2, are too variable.
- The academy improvement plan is not as effective as it should be. It does not contain precisely measurable targets which indicate how teaching and the achievement of different groups of pupils in each year group are to improve. 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 go unnoticed until the end of the year. It also means that governors are not able to accurately check the school's effectiveness.
- Through training courses which have helped them to develop their leadership skills, the academy has recently provided good support for some staff who are responsible for subjects. This is having a good impact on achievement in mathematics but it has yet to fully impact on pupils' progress in English in Key Stage 2 because it has not ensured that pupils' progress is consistently good or better.
- The targets set for teachers to help them improve their work are not as helpful as they should be because they do not always clearly identify what teachers need to do to improve.
- As the government no longer requires schools to assess pupils in Years 5, 7 and 8 using National Curriculum levels, leaders are developing their own system of assessment alongside other schools. Until this is fully developed, the academy is continuing to assess pupils using National Curriculum levels. This information is shared with parents through regular reports which parents find extremely helpful.
- The curriculum is appropriately matched to pupils' interest and abilities. It is made more exciting through, for example, an extensive range of extremely well-attended extra-curricular activities and clubs, a wide range of educational trips and visits, and 'super learning days' which pupils thoroughly enjoy. These activities, as well as the good focus on a wide range of values which are regularly explained in assemblies and lessons, help pupils to prepare for life in modern Britain. They also help them to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding very well.
- Pupils in Year 8 receive good support to help them start thinking about their future careers through focused careers days which involve a range of visitors from different professions. These give pupils very good opportunities to learn about different future employment options.
- The academy uses the additional primary sport funding very well. Pupils benefit from a wide range of competitive sports with other schools and a high proportion of pupils attend extra-curricular sports clubs. As a result, pupils are developing a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle.
- Leaders have the skills needed to ensure that the necessary improvements are made because they have demonstrated the ability to secure good behaviour and outstanding provision for pupils' safety. They have made sure that teaching is usually good in Key Stage 3.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body does not hold the academy to account as well as it should. For example, while governors understand pupils' achievement data, they do not ensure that they receive it in sufficient detail to enable them to check the progress that different groups of pupils are making in all year groups. Similarly, they do not check teaching in enough detail. The governing body is not able to accurately monitor the academy's effectiveness throughout the year because of the lack of specific

targets in the academy improvement plan.

- Governors are appropriately involved in making decisions about whether teachers should receive pay rises in relation to pupils making good progress. However, they have not ensured that teachers' targets are consistently linked to specific aspects of teaching which need improving.
- The curriculum is monitored by the governing body. Governors know that the curriculum helps pupils to develop tolerance and respect for people of different cultures and faiths as well as preparing them well to take their place in modern Britain.
- Governors know how the additional pupil premium, Year 7 'catch up' and sport funding are used. They are aware of the impact that this funding has because they check this regularly.
- The governing body carries out its statutory duties fully. For example, governors ensure that the academy fulfils statutory responsibilities regarding safeguarding: appropriate checks are in place for visitors to the academy and all staff have been checked as required and are trained to keep pupils safe and free from harm.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Most pupils behave well in class and around the academy. Pupils are polite, well mannered and courteous. They dress smartly and wear their uniform with pride. Pupils show a high level of respect towards each other and staff. Most also respect the school environment; the site is tidy and free from litter.
- When pupils are taught well, they demonstrate good attitudes to learning by trying their best and working hard. When teaching is not as good as it should be, some pupils lose concentration but most continue to try their best, showing a good determination to succeed.
- Exclusions from the academy are rare. This reflects the positive attitudes to learning that most pupils have.
- Pupils attend school regularly and attendance is above average. Pupils arrive punctually to lessons and most are well prepared with the appropriate equipment.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire agree that the academy makes sure that pupils behave well. The overwhelming majority of staff who responded to the questionnaire also agree.
- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils have a strong understanding of safety matters, including how to keep safe when working online and, for example, the dangers associated with extremism.
- Bullying is rare and, as a result, pupils feel safe at the academy. Pupils are taught about the different forms of bullying, including homophobic bullying, and they are appropriately equipped to manage such situations should they arise.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Since the academy opened, pupils have not always benefited from consistently good or better teaching across all year groups, particularly in reading and writing in Years 5 and 6. This variability is the reason why teaching requires improvement.
- Sometimes pupils do not make as much progress as they are capable of because teachers do not use assessment information in lessons as well as they should. This means that some pupils, including the most-able pupils, sometimes make slower progress because they are not moved on to harder work as soon as they are ready.
- Teachers' written comments when they mark pupils' books do not always show pupils how to improve in enough detail.

- Teaching for the most-able pupils is variable. When it is most effective, teachers skilfully use appropriately challenging questions which make the most-able pupils think hard. In addition, some teachers have high expectations of what these pupils are capable of and pupils are required to use their initiative and work at an appropriately fast pace. However, this is inconsistent and sometimes these pupils and others are not challenged enough by teachers' questions and they are allowed to work too slowly.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs do not consistently benefit from well-focused support from teachers and assistant teachers, when it is needed. Sometimes the particular needs of these pupils are not always fully met which means that the pupils do not make good progress. By contrast, these pupils do make good progress when teachers and assistant teachers (staff who work with teachers to support pupils) work effectively together to make sure that work is at the right level. When this happens, it is often complemented by very good support from assistant teachers who help pupils to make good progress through, for example, the use of good questioning and prompting.
- Almost all teachers help pupils to show respect for others and pupils have highly positive relationships with each other and their teachers. When this is combined with good teaching, the positive attitudes that most pupils have towards learning make a strong contribution to their good progress.
- The additional teaching which some disadvantaged pupils receive, along with those pupils who do not attain the expected levels by the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics, is good. It helps pupils to improve the key skills which are holding them back and it is particularly effective in mathematics.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils join the academy at the start of Year 5 with attainment which is usually above that which is typical for pupils' ages. While attainment at the end of Year 6 has been a little variable since 2012, it is usually above average, overall. At the end of Year 6 in 2013, pupils attained levels which were, on average, six months ahead of other pupils nationally. However, attainment is not as high as it should be because not enough pupils make steadily good progress, particularly in reading and writing.
- The progress that many pupils make is not always as good as it should be, including for the relatively small number who speak English as an additional language, the most-able pupils and pupils from different backgrounds. However, many pupils make good progress in Key Stage 3 because they more often benefit from teaching which is good. By the end of Year 8, many pupils attain high standards in English, mathematics and science and pupils' overall attainment is similar to what is usually typical of pupils who are one year older.
- The most-able pupils do not always achieve their full potential by the end of Year 6. However, when these pupils are appropriately challenged and expected to work at a fast pace and complete harder work, many achieve high standards by the time they reach the end of Year 8.
- The academy spends the additional pupil premium funding by providing additional staff who offer one-to-one academic or personal support when it is needed. In 2014, the academy's data show that disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 achieved levels in the national tests that were, on average, two terms behind other pupils in mathematics and writing and almost half a term ahead in reading. Compared to 2013, the difference was narrower in mathematics and reading and wider in writing. Compared to all pupils nationally in 2013 (as no 2014 national data was available at the time of the inspection), Year 6 disadvantaged pupils in 2014 were a term and a half behind in mathematics, one term ahead in reading and two and a half terms behind in writing. By the time disadvantaged pupils complete Year 8, most pupils catch up with their classmates in reading and mathematics, although this is not always the position in writing, where some pupils do not catch up as quickly.
- A very small number of pupils are supported by additional Year 7 'catch-up' funding which helps those who join the academy with attainment below the expected level in English and mathematics. The academy uses this funding effectively to provide teaching in small groups in English and mathematics. Pupils are catching up as a result, although progress is much faster in mathematics than it is in English.

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

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| Unique reference number | 137904 |
| Local authority | Central Bedfordshire |
| Inspection number | 448628 |

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

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| 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 | 430 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Lindsay Smith |
| Headteacher | Stephen Cardwell |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Telephone number | 01908 582022 |
| Fax number | 01908 281732 |
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