

St. Augustine's Academy

Oakwood Avenue, Dunstable, LU5 4AS

Inspection dates 21–22 October 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children get an excellent start in the Reception class. Clear routines help children settle in quickly. Excellent teaching helps them develop the skills and knowledge they need to be ready for Key Stage 1 learning.
- Pupils achieve well. They make good progress and standards are steadily rising year on year. This means that, from low starting points, pupils leave the academy with standards broadly average for their age.
- Teaching is good because teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do. They make lessons interesting and pupils want to do well.
- Pupils behave well in and around the academy. They are polite and helpful to adults and each other. They follow the excellent role models set by teachers and other adults.
- Pupils feel safe in the academy. They know how to stay safe in different situations.
- The interim principal has ensured that, despite her taking up post at a traumatic time for staff, the quality of teaching and learning has remained good.
- She and her senior leaders have made improvements in the way pupils' progress is tracked. They can quickly identify any pupils who are in danger of falling behind and help them keep up.
- Governors are very supportive. They ask leaders challenging questions to hold them accountable for improving the academy.
- Governors have ensured stability for the academy through the appointment of the interim principal. They are in the process of recruiting a permanent principal.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a particular strength of the academy. Teachers frequently refer to the school values during lessons and model them in their behaviour towards the pupils.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The guidance that teachers give pupils, particularly when marking their books, is not consistently good in all classes and all subjects.
- Occasionally work is too easy or difficult for pupils which means that they do not make even better progress.
- Subject leaders rely on the assessment leader to analyse school data. They do not make their own analysis to tell them how well pupils are achieving in their areas of responsibility.
- Apart from the chair and vice chair, not many other governors visit regularly to see how well the academy is doing.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 10 lessons or parts of lessons, six of which were seen together with the principal or deputy principal.
- Meetings were held with the principal, other staff, two groups of pupils and two governors.
- Informal discussions were held with parents.
- The inspector took account of the 17 completed staff questionnaires. There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to display results.
- The inspector observed the academy's work and reviewed a range of documentation, including the academy's checks on its performance, its analysis and tracking of pupils' progress, records of behaviour and safety, academy improvement plans, records relating to classroom observations and the management of staff performance, safeguarding arrangements and records of meetings of the governing body.
- The inspectors also looked at pupils' work, listened to pupils read and checked information on attendance.

Inspection team

Susan Hughes, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- St Augustine's Academy converted to become an academy school in September 2012. When its predecessor school, called Downside Lower School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises of a Reception class where children attend full-time.
- The school is expanding into a primary school and currently takes pupils up to Year 5. They will form a Year 6 class in 2015.
- As there are currently no pupils in Year 6, no comparison can be made with national floor standards.
- St Augustine's Academy became a voluntary controlled church school in September 2012.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above average and represents about half of the pupils. These pupils are supported by the pupil premium which is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- Thirty nine per cent of pupils are disabled or have special educational needs and are supported at school action. Ten percent of pupils are supported at school action plus, have a statement of special educational needs or have an education, health and care plan. Both proportions are above the national averages.
- The academy has been through a difficult time with staffing changes. The principal joined the school in January 2014, on an interim basis, following the sudden death of the previous principal.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to raise standards further by ensuring that:
 - work in lessons is always pitched at the right level so that all pupils make even better progress
 - teachers provide clear guidance to pupils about how they can improve their work in all subjects, and make sure pupils act on the advice given.
- Strengthen leadership and management by making sure that:
 - all leaders analyse school progress data so that they can use the information to drive improvements in their area of responsibility
 - more governors visit the school to see how it is doing, and they report their findings to the rest of the governing body.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Under the exceptional leadership of the interim principal, academy staff have maintained high standards of teaching and learning throughout a difficult time. She has supported staff in dealing with the loss of their principal, while ensuring that the learning and well-being of the pupils did not suffer. As a result, standards are steadily rising and pupils achieve well.
- Senior leaders have introduced a new way of tracking pupils' progress. This means that they can quickly identify any pupils who are in danger of falling behind and help them keep up. Subject leaders, however, are still reliant on the assessment leader to help them analyse the data that the new tracking system provides.
- The procedures for monitoring and supporting the progress of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are already well-established as a result of the excellent leadership and management.
- The academy has used the pupil premium funding particularly well to support pupils' progress. Gaps between the attainment of eligible pupils and others in the school are closing steadily in both English and mathematics.
- Leaders hold teachers accountable for the progress of pupils in their class and arrangements for checking teachers' performance have contributed to at least good teaching across the academy. Individual targets are used by the principal and the governing body to judge whether pay rises and promotion are justified by results. The academy promotes equality of opportunity well and makes sure that no groups of pupils achieve less well than others.
- The subjects pupils learn are interesting and exciting. Pupils told inspectors that teachers make the lessons enjoyable by devising quizzes and games to help them learn. They practise their literacy, numeracy and communication skills in the different topics studied.
- The primary sports funding has been used to extend the opportunities for pupils to compete against other schools and improve their swimming skills. It also funds some sports clubs and new playground equipment. As a result, pupils are very active and engaged at lunchtimes and playtimes, their swimming skills have improved and the academy is much more involved in inter-school competitions.
- The academy works well with parents and encourages them to support their children at home by holding open days such as the recently successful 'Maths Road Show'. Leaders work closely with a wide range of agencies who support families to help both pupils and their families in times of difficulty.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is developed through strong links with the church and the academy's own values system. Pupils told the inspector how the 'honesty tree' and 'values basket' are used in assembly to help them make the right choices. The 'Star of the Week' award is given to pupils who have demonstrated values such as respect, honesty and consideration in their behaviour during the week. This supports good behaviour in school and helps to prepare pupils for life outside the academy.
- The academy makes sure that staff have opportunities to develop their skills through attending courses and have used the good support of an external consultant. The local authority has also verified the academy's judgements about how well pupils are doing by checking the accuracy of its assessment.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very supportive and understand the academy's strengths and how it can improve. They are also very aware how they can improve their own practice. While the chair and vice-chair visit regularly, other governors visit less often and visits are not always reported to the rest of the governing body.
 - The governors take into account the views of parents and pupils. For example, governors asked what strengths they would like to see in a new principal and included some of the pupils' ideas in the

recruitment advertisement.

- Finances are managed effectively. Governors understand about pupils' progress data and check that the pupil premium funding is helping disadvantaged pupils do at least as well as their classmates. They know that the primary sports funding is providing more opportunities for pupils to take part in physical activities and is improving pupils' skills.
- Governors know how good teaching is, and oversee the arrangements for the appraisal of teachers carefully to ensure it is contributing effectively to improvements in teaching. They make sure that teachers' pay rises are linked to the progress that pupils make and that teachers benefit from high-quality training.
- Governors ensure that national requirements for safeguarding and child protection are met in full.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They move calmly around the academy, readily holding doors open for adults and each other. Good manners are encouraged and pupils respond well by remembering to greet and thank each other politely.
- On the playground, pupils of different ages play together well. The range of equipment means that pupils share and take turns but always have something to do. Equally good use is made of the covered quiet area where pupils sit and sociably chat.
- Older pupils take their roles of responsibility seriously. They eagerly volunteer to oversee the playground equipment, help supervise the early years children at lunch time, run the library and organise preparations for assemblies. They carry out their duties responsibly and reliably.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and try their best in lessons. They told the inspector that the new systems for encouraging good behaviour both in lessons and at playtimes work well. This is because everyone understands them and they are consistently applied by all teachers. A few pupils find behaving well difficult, but sensitive support by adults and other pupils means that lessons are rarely disrupted.
- The academy works closely with parents to ensure their children attend well. Attendance has risen over recent years and is currently in line with the national average.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. There are clear procedures for ensuring pupils' safety and to meet child protection requirements, and staff are rigorously checked prior to appointment.
- Pupils told the inspector that they feel safe in the academy, not just because of the secure fencing, but because teachers make them feel safe. One pupil said 'You have to feel safe in your heart knowing that there is always someone you can go to with a problem'.
- Pupils understand what bullying is and the different forms it can take, including physical and cyber bullying. They said that there are sometimes incidents of bullying in the school, mainly name-calling. However, these are always dealt with well by adults.
- The academy gives pupils opportunities to learn how to keep themselves safe in different situations such as when riding their bikes or in case of fire. Pupils are particularly knowledgeable about how to stay safe when using the computer and understand why they need to take certain precautions.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers make sure that lessons are interesting so that pupils want to try hard. They encourage pupils to feel confident enough to tell them if they are finding something difficult, and to 'have a go' without fear of failure. This was evident during the inspection when Year 5 pupils investigating prime numbers confidently shared their theories and strategies with the rest of the class.
- Teachers make sure that lessons build on what pupils already know. They take opportunities to link different subjects to consolidate previous learning or to help put new learning in context. For example, while studying the symmetry of a butterfly, Year 1 pupils made links with previous shape work with septagons and with the wildlife discussions of their 'Green Fingers' topic.
- Additional adults in the classroom effectively support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. They are sensitive to pupils' specific needs and follow the lead of the teacher in consistently correcting language errors and promoting the use of appropriate vocabulary, while also building pupils' confidence. Some disadvantaged pupils also benefit from small group or individual support, when needed, to help them make good progress in lessons.
- On occasions, less-able pupils sometimes find the work too difficult and rely on additional adults to help them rather than being able to get on with the work on their own.
- Some teachers give pupils clear guidance as to how they can improve their work, particularly when marking their English books. However, this is not consistently good in all classes and is less helpful in other subjects.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils start in Key Stage 1 with skills below average in English and mathematics. They make good progress and narrow the gap between their attainment and that expected for their age. In 2013 standards by the end of the Key Stage were just below average in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2014, standards had risen considerably in reading and mathematics, with a slight improvement in writing.
- The results of the most recent national screening check at the end of Year 1 on pupils' knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters represent in words) were just above average. During the inspection, these younger pupils were able to use their phonics skills to read unfamiliar words such as 'favourite' and 'people'. All pupils who spoke to the inspector said they enjoyed reading and, while some did not read regularly at home, all read regularly in the academy.
- Although they attain slightly lower than other pupils, disadvantaged pupils make good progress overall. In 2013, at the end of Key Stage 1 they were two terms behind their classmates in reading and one and half terms behind in writing and mathematics. However, they were less than a term behind similar pupils nationally in these subjects. The progress they make is at least as good as that of other pupils and in many cases they make more rapid progress. This means that the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils narrows as they move through the school.
- More-able pupils make equally good progress throughout the academy. Occasionally however, they have to complete work that is too easy for them before receiving work which will help them achieve even better.
- There is no significant difference between the attainment of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. Those pupils who join the academy speaking English as an additional language make rapid progress in learning English and then make similar progress to their classmates.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported. Most of the support is provided by well-briefed additional adults in the classroom so that they learn alongside their classmates. Most make good progress in all subjects throughout the school. Their specific needs are quickly identified and help provided so that they make good progress from their different starting points.

The early years provision is outstanding

- Children start in the Reception class with skills well below those typical for their age. Many find concentrating difficult and have poor language skills. Through sensitive teaching, and consistently applied routines, children soon settle in and develop these skills. For example, regular 'chat sessions' encourage children to talk to each other about their interests. During the inspection, children showed excellent social awareness of each other as they talked and listened in small groups. The teacher then politely asked what they had been discussing and children demonstrated that they had engaged in well-balanced conversations developing both their social and language skills.
- Children work and play in a safe, secure learning environment. They enjoy coming to school, settle quickly and behave well. Good emphasis is placed on promoting their safety and their physical and emotional well-being.
- Activities, both inside and outdoors are well planned to develop a range of skills. Children are encouraged to be responsible for their actions. All adults working in the classroom consistently model appropriate language and responses which influence the way the children behave. For example, two boys writing a list of the building jobs discussed keeping the tool box where they could share it. Meanwhile, other children imagined they were in a health centre and the 'receptionist' copied the teacher when pretending to use the telephone, showing an early awareness for appropriate language for formal occasions.
- Parents are encouraged to take an active part in their children's learning. They are invited to sessions such as how phonics are used to help pupils read and write. Parents are also invited to share their experiences with children. For example, a parent recently led the children's learning about Diwali.
- The early years team is well led by the vice principal who ensures consistency in the way they work with the children and the rigour of checking the progress they make. Between them, they create an environment in which children flourish, both socially and academically. This means that children enjoy their learning and leave the early years with many skills closer to those typical for their age and well prepared for Key Stage 1. Literacy and numeracy skills, however, are still below typical despite the excellent progress made during the year.

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	138558
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	448644

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4–10
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Pepworth
Principal	Lynne James (Interim)
Date of previous school inspection	None
Telephone number	01582 661778
Fax number	01582 607047
Email address	office@staugustinesacademy.co.uk;

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