

# Woodland Middle School Academy

Malham Close, Flitwick, Bedford, MK45 1NP

**Inspection dates** 11–12 March 2015

| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Good                        | 2        |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Requires improvement</b> | <b>3</b> |
| 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

- Achievement is too variable because teaching is not consistently good.
- The proportion of pupils who achieve the expected level in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 has been below average for two years.
- The proportion of pupils who achieve higher levels in the Key Stage 2 spelling, punctuation and grammar test has been below average for two years. Teachers do not teach these skills regularly in all subjects.
- The progress that pupils make in reading and writing in both key stages is not always fast enough.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not always catch up with other pupils quickly enough because teachers do not check their work regularly.
- Sometimes, teachers do not set work which is pitched at the right level for pupils, particularly the most able pupils.
- Teachers' marking and feedback sometimes does not always show pupils how to improve their work.
- Leaders at all levels do not check the achievement of different groups of pupils and the quality of teaching in sufficient detail. Subject leaders have not been fully trained to do this effectively.
- The governing body does not hold the academy to account as well as it should for the impact that additional funding has on pupils' achievement.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders make sure that pupils are safe. Their work in this area is outstanding.
- The curriculum is well planned to help pupils develop a strong understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues as well as helping them to understand British values.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. The vast majority are well mannered, polite and courteous, and they are respectful towards each other and their teachers. Relationships are positive across the academy.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because their needs are accurately met, particularly by teaching assistants.
- Many pupils make good progress in mathematics in Key Stage 3, making up for lost ground in Key Stage 2.
- For several years, some pupils in Year 8 have achieved good GCSE passes in the thinking and reasoning course.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 29 lessons, 17 of which were jointly observed with senior leaders. The inspection team made several short visits to other lessons to check on the progress and behaviour of different groups of pupils. Inspectors also looked at a wide range of work in pupils' 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 131 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- 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 academy's development plan and data on pupils' progress.
- The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a school improvement consultant who works with the academy.

## Inspection team

Richard Sutton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Andrew Hemmings

Additional Inspector

Christine Ockendon

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.)
- Nine out of ten pupils are from White British backgrounds. There are no other significant groups of pupils in the academy, and almost all pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.
- 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, provides support for just over one tenth of pupils. This is below average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- No pupils are educated off-site or through alternative provision.
- The academy works closely with other local schools as part of the 'Redborne Pyramid'.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and raise achievement so that they are consistently good or better, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and in mathematics in Years 5 and 6, by ensuring that:
  - disadvantaged pupils have their work checked regularly in all lessons by all teachers
  - marking and feedback always give pupils precise advice on how they can improve their work and checking that the advice has been acted on
  - all teachers use assessment information to plan activities which are pitched at the right level, particularly for the most able pupils
  - pupils are helped to improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar in all subjects.
- Improve the impact that all leaders and managers, including governors, have on teaching and achievement by:
  - checking the progress that different groups of pupils are making in all subjects and year groups in detail
  - making sure that the checks which are made on the quality of teaching are more regular and use all the information available
  - improving the impact of all subject leaders by ensuring that they have the skills to check achievement and teaching in detail
  - making sure that the governing body receives detailed information about teaching and the achievement of different groups of pupils
  - ensuring that the governing body checks the impact that additional funding has on pupils' achievement, including the additional pupil premium funding.

An external review of governance and of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders at all levels have not made sure that all pupils benefit from consistently good or better teaching. As a result, pupils' achievement is too variable across year groups and subjects.
- Leaders do not check the progress of different groups of pupils so that teaching can be improved for any groups that may be achieving less well than others. As a result, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in mathematics and in spelling, punctuation and grammar in Key Stage 2 has been falling further behind that of others in recent years.
- Senior leaders check how good teaching and achievement are in each subject through subject audits. These audits do not have as much impact on improving teaching as they could because leaders do not fully use all the information that is available to establish how good teaching is. As a result, teachers do not always receive sufficient detail about how to improve their teaching. In addition, these checks do not take place regularly enough so that any weaknesses can be quickly tackled. Consequently, the leadership of teaching is not as effective as it could be.
- Subject leaders have not been provided with sufficient support and training to develop the skills needed to check teaching and achievement in detail in their areas. This is an important reason why teaching and achievement are too variable.
- The impact of the academy's use of its additional funds, such as the pupil premium, is variable. Gaps in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others have got wider in recent years in mathematics and in spelling, punctuation and grammar in Key Stage 2. However, by the end of Year 8, gaps are narrower than they are in Year 6.
- The curriculum is adequately matched to pupils' interest and abilities. While the curriculum does not have a consistently good impact on pupils' academic achievement because it is not always taught as well as it should be, it does have a good impact on pupils' behaviour and personal development. It is particularly effective in helping pupils to understand spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues through the very good focus on values across all aspects of the curriculum and in assemblies. In addition, the 'school parliament', which models the British democratic system, adds to pupils' good understanding of British values.
- The academy uses the additional primary sport funding well. It has been used to improve the range of sporting activities available, and this has significantly increased the level of participation. In addition, pupils enjoy a great deal of success in competitive sporting events. As a result, pupils are improving their attainment in physical education as well as developing a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle.
- Pupils in Year 8 receive appropriate careers advice and guidance, and they are able to explore their future career options, as well as research GCSE courses, in readiness for when they join the upper school.
- Leaders have ensured that the vast majority of pupils and staff show a good level of respect for each other. There is no hint of discrimination anywhere in the academy. Arrangements for keeping pupils safe are outstanding.
- The leadership which supports disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good. Leaders make sure that any additional support is quickly put in place for individual pupils, and leaders make good use of external agencies, as appropriate. Leaders have made sure that small-group teaching and the support provided by teaching assistants is good.
- The school improvement consultant has provided support to the mathematics department. This is supporting the department well in helping teachers to improve pupils' achievement.

**■ 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. As a result, they do not know how good it is for the different groups of pupils in all year groups.
- Governors know how the additional pupil premium, Year 7 'catch up' and sport funding are used. However, they do not hold the academy to account for the impact that this funding has for eligible pupils.
- Governors are appropriately involved in making decisions about whether teachers should receive pay rises in relation to pupils making good progress. The governing body also has appropriate procedures in place for tackling staff underperformance.
- 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.
- 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****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well in class and around the academy. They are polite, well mannered and courteous and dress smartly and wear their uniform with pride. Pupils show a high level of respect towards each other and staff, and most are aware of the 'value of the month' which is used well by the academy to support the strong relationships and good behaviour that are prevalent across the academy.
- Pupils demonstrate good attitudes to learning, most try their best, work hard and show a good determination to succeed.
- Attendance is average. Pupils arrive punctually to lessons and most are well prepared with the appropriate equipment.

**Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils have a detailed understanding of safety matters, including how to keep safe when working online. They are taught about how to keep safe in personal, social and health education lessons as well as through assemblies.
- 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.
- Pupils actively support each other with respect to bullying, and members of the 'anti-bullying squad' are extremely well trained by staff to listen effectively to pupils who may have concerns as well as refer their peers to a member of staff, if appropriate. Almost all pupils in the school know to whom they can turn if they have any concerns, and pupils are confident that staff will deal with matters quickly and effectively.
- When pupils join the school in Year 5, they are assigned mentors from Year 8 who provide good support and advice to help pupils settle in well to the academy and feel safe.
- Checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are robust and comprehensive. All staff have received good training with respect to a wide range of safety matters and all are equipped with the skills to recognise pupils who may be at risk.

**The quality of teaching** requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, pupils have not always benefited from teaching which is good or better. As a result, some pupils do not make as much progress as they are capable of making. Teachers do not always give disadvantaged pupils as much attention as some of these pupils need. For example, they do not regularly check disadvantaged pupils' work to ensure that they are working quickly and accurately. This is particularly important for many of these pupils as some do not always produce work which is as good as that of their peers.
- Teaching in reading, writing and mathematics does not always result in pupils making consistently good progress because teachers do not use assessment information as well as they could so that work is always pitched at the right level for pupils. This is particularly the position in mathematics in Years 5 and 6. On occasions, the most able pupils spend too much time working on tasks and activities which they can already do or which they finish quickly because the work is too easy.
- Teachers' marking does not always show pupils how to improve in enough detail. On the occasions when marking does show pupils how to improve, teachers sometimes do not check that pupils have acted on the advice given. There is, however, some highly effective marking in some classes, including Year 5 English.
- Sometimes, teachers do not use assessment information well enough to help them plan activities which are well matched to pupils' skills and abilities. This means that the work is sometimes too easy or too hard. In particular, the most able pupils do not always receive work which is hard enough.
- Pupils who need extra support to improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar receive additional tuition. The quality of this support is good because it is precisely focused on pupils' specific needs, and many pupils improve as a result. However, pupils are not consistently helped to improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar in all subjects.
- Teaching for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good. Many of these pupils receive very good additional support in small groups. The teaching that they receive in these small groups is very well matched to each pupil's needs and, as a result, pupils make good progress. However, teaching for these pupils is variable when the pupils are in their usual timetabled lessons because not all teachers make sure that work is planned to help pupils develop the particular skills that they find difficult.
- Teaching assistants are effective in helping pupils to make good progress. This is because they have been well trained by the academy and they make sure that the support that they provide is precisely targeted to what individual pupils need.
- Teaching is good in several subjects including geography, religious education, art, design and technology and computing.

**The achievement of pupils** requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because it has been below average in mathematics at the end of Year 6 for two years and below average at the higher levels in 2014 in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Pupils have not consistently made good progress in reading and writing, and attainment has been average for the past two years, but no better.
- By the time pupils leave the academy at the end of Year 8, many have made steady, rather than good, progress in reading and writing. In mathematics, although progress is not fast enough in Key Stage 2, many pupils make good progress and make up ground in Key Stage 3.
- Disadvantaged pupils are not making rapid enough progress and not catching up with other pupils quickly enough. In 2014, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 achieved standards in reading which were almost one year behind other pupils in the academy. In writing, pupils were two terms behind and in mathematics pupils were over one and a half years behind. These differences are similar when compared to all pupils

nationally. The gaps in achievement have been getting wider since 2012 in mathematics but have narrowed since 2013 in reading and writing. When pupils reach Year 8, these gaps are narrower than they are in Year 6 in all three subjects. However, gaps are not closing quickly enough in each key stage.

- Although an average proportion of pupils achieved the highest levels in Year 6 mathematics in 2014, the most able students do not always make good progress because some teachers do not always plan work which is hard enough.
- Some pupils who do not achieve the expected level at the end of Year 6 do not catch up quickly enough. As a result, the additional Year 7 'catch-up' funding, which is used to help these pupils, is not used as effectively as it should be. The academy uses this funding to provide additional small group classes.
- Some pupils do not always achieve as well as they could because they are not always helped to improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar in all subjects. However, many who benefit from extra tuition in the 'skills' groups make good progress.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good because these pupils benefit from good teaching in small groups and from teaching assistants. However, achievement is not more rapid because many of these pupils do not always make the same levels of progress in their usual lessons.
- Thirty pupils have taken a GCSE examination at the end of Year 8 in thinking and reasoning for the past few years. All the pupils have achieved grades A\* to C which is an excellent achievement, particularly as the examination is usually taken at the age of 16.

## 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

|                                |                      |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 136560               |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Central Bedfordshire |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 456063               |

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

|  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Middle deemed secondary      |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Academy converter            |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 9–13                         |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                        |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 565                          |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body           |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Mandy Wilsmore               |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Jeff Conquest                |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 11 July 2012                 |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01525 750400                 |
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