

Biddenham International School and Sports College

Biddenham Turn, Bedford MK40 4AZ

Inspection dates 3–4 November 2015

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders, including governors, have high expectations for pupils. They rigorously monitor teaching and learning and provide effective training. This has led to teaching which is typically good.
- Pupils currently at the school are making good progress in mathematics and English. Progress in all other subjects is improving rapidly.
- The progress of disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils has improved.
- Governors operate effectively. They are actively involved in monitoring the work of senior leaders.
- The school provides well-structured support and is highly effective in its approach to keeping pupils safe.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is good and they feel safe.
- Pupils have a positive attitude towards their learning. They arrive to lessons promptly.
- The school is an inclusive and harmonious community where pupils show respect for one another. This is because the school plans exceptionally well for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils with medical and emotional needs are exceptionally well supported through the school's specialist unit.
- The sixth form provides a good education for pupils. The progress of pupils following academic courses is improving.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small number of teachers are not consistently providing pupils with detailed feedback to help them to improve their work.
- Teaching assistants are not always used effectively throughout lessons.
- A few teachers are not setting the most-able pupils work that is demanding enough.
- Although attendance has improved, there are still a few pupils whose attendance is too low.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and assessment to outstanding through continuing to develop existing good practice within the school by ensuring that all teachers:
 - give pupils useful and detailed feedback to help them to improve their learning
 - make the best use of teaching assistants in the classroom
 - make sure that pupils are given sufficient opportunities to apply their communication skills across all subjects
 - enable pupils to better solve problems in mathematics.
- Accelerate the progress of the most-able pupils by ensuring they are consistently given work which deepens their knowledge and understanding.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the recent strategies taken to improve attendance to maximise their impact on increasing attendance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher, governing body and senior leaders have shown a steely determination to raise the aspirations of staff and pupils in order to improve the quality of teaching, progress and attainment of all pupils. This has been successfully communicated to staff, who share this vision. Pupils talked about the high expectations teachers have of them and how teachers support them to achieve their best.
- There is a rigorous yet supportive process in place to monitor the quality of teaching. School leaders have detailed and accurate knowledge about the quality of teaching within the school. Training tailored to the individual needs of teachers, as well as whole-school priorities, have supported staff to develop their teaching. There has been a supportive yet rigorous approach to tackling any underperformance.
- Teachers are fully accountable for the achievement of the pupils they teach. Any salary progression is determined by teachers meeting targets linked to pupils' progress.
- The governing body has undergone a process of restructuring in order to increase its effectiveness. Governors are making better use of their expertise to ensure the school runs effectively. They understand pupils' performance data and talk knowledgeably about the progress of different groups of pupils. Governors visit the school on a regular basis to monitor the work of the school and ask challenging questions of senior and middle leaders.
- Middle leaders show a commitment to continued improvement within their subject areas. They have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development in their subject and a sustained impact on improving teaching.
- Pupils' progress is tracked and analysed thoroughly, by both senior and middle leaders. Pupils who are falling behind with their studies are quickly identified and appropriate action is taken.
- The school effectively uses the pupil premium funding it receives to support disadvantaged pupils. The school employs a range of successful strategies and partnerships to support the academic progress, behaviour and well-being of this group of pupils, enabling them to make good progress.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are very well supported. Weekly team meetings ensure that the programmes in place are appropriate and are supporting an individual pupil to make good progress. The school works closely with these pupils' parents.
- Leaders ensure all staff fully understand the school's safeguarding policy and practice. Staff are vigilant and alert to any potential risks to pupils. The school takes swift action if it feels that any pupils are at risk. Safeguarding arrangements are effective and meet the statutory requirements.
- The school's curriculum provides pupils with a broad and balanced range of subjects. The Year 7 curriculum is project-based and pupils study a range of subjects through a themed project. At the time of the inspection, pupils were learning about the Second World War, and lessons in English, languages, humanities and science all related to this topic.
- The curriculum provides excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through a range of after-school activities, trips and visits. In lessons, teachers plan work that supports these areas of development. For example, in a Year 9 English lesson, pupils were discussing a poem they had read about refugees and making links with the plight of Syrian refugees.
- The school ensures that pupils are taught about life in modern Britain and British values. The school makes pupils aware of the potential dangers of extremism and radicalisation and caters for a mixed community, and pupils are taught to respect, appreciate and tolerate each other's cultures and beliefs.
- The local authority has supported the school since the last inspection. It has employed external specialists to work with the English and mathematics departments. The local authority senior advisor has worked with senior staff to monitor the quality of their work. The local authority has confidence in the ability of senior leaders to continue to drive forward improvement.
- The overwhelming majority of staff and parents who expressed a view feel that the school is well led and managed.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the school and effectively hold all leaders to account.
 - The governing body effectively monitors and understands the impact of the pupil premium spending on the progress of disadvantaged pupils.
 - Governors ensure that performance management is effective and that pay rises are awarded

appropriately.

- The governing body checks that the curriculum promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and promotes fundamental British values.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection because leaders have successfully addressed the areas for improvement. As a result, teaching, learning and assessment are now typically good across the school.
- There is a positive climate for learning within classrooms. This is because there are good relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils are quick to follow instructions, so very little learning time is lost.
- Many teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to ask probing questions to determine and deepen pupils' understanding.
- Homework is set regularly and is relevant to pupils' learning. Year 7 pupils told inspectors that they enjoyed their project-based homework as it was interesting and challenging. Most parents felt that their child received appropriate homework.
- Inspectors saw some excellent examples of pupils developing their oral and written communication in a number of subjects. In these subjects, inspectors saw high-quality written work and pupils confidently taking part in discussions and debates. However, these opportunities were not seen in all subjects and as a result pupils' written work was not as strong in these subject areas.
- Teaching assistants working with small groups of pupils or individual pupils have a positive impact on pupils' progress. They have good subject knowledge and high expectations of the pupils. In most lessons, teachers provide teaching assistants with targets for pupils and these are reviewed at the end of the lesson. This leads to highly effective support. However, there are occasions where teachers are not making full use of teaching assistants in lessons, especially at times when teachers are talking to the whole class or leading pupil discussions. Teaching assistants are not given a clear role, so their impact on learning is limited in these sessions.
- Teachers mark pupils' work frequently and most teachers consistently give pupils detailed feedback so that they can improve their work. However, there are occasions when some teachers are not consistently providing sufficiently detailed feedback. As a result, not all pupils are making rapid progress.
- Teachers plan lessons that build upon pupils' existing knowledge and understanding and which challenge most pupils. Occasionally, some teachers do not plan sufficiently demanding work for the most-able pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident and keen to learn. They are keen to succeed and understand the importance of their education.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that bullying is rare. They have confidence in the school dealing with bullying effectively should it occur. The overwhelming majority of parents agree that their child is safe and happy at the school and that the school deals effectively with any bullying; inspectors agree with this view.
- The Sanctuary provides exceptional support for all pupils. It is run by a qualified nurse who is able to treat minor injuries and administer medication. Staff help pupils with long-term medical conditions to continue with their education. Support is provided for pupils with emotional issues and staff arrange for outside agencies to visit in order to provide specialist advice and support. Staff are committed to ensuring that pupils are cared for and continue to learn. Several pupils told inspectors how much they valued the support they have received from The Sanctuary.
- Through personal, social and health education lessons, assemblies and visits from speakers, pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. They are aware of the dangers of using social media and the internet. Pupils are also taught about other risks to their health and well-being.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Behaviour at break and lunchtime is extremely good. Pupils mix well together and are respectful towards one another. They value the diversity of the school population and say that all pupils are welcome.
- At the end of break, pupils promptly return to lessons. Movement between lessons is calm and well ordered. Pupils take care of their environment and, as a result, the school is clean and free of litter.
- In the vast majority of lessons, pupils are well behaved. There are occasions when low-level disruption does occur, but pupils respond well to teachers' instructions. There are a few pupils in the school who require support to improve their behaviour. Effective strategies are in place to ensure that these pupils learn well.
- The school has employed a number of robust strategies to improve the attendance of pupils who are persistently absent from school. This has resulted in improved overall attendance. However, as yet there has been little evaluation of which strategies have been most successful in helping individual pupils to attend school more regularly.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils are set challenging targets. From their starting points, pupils currently in the school are now making good progress in English and mathematics and across most subjects.
- In 2015, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more A* to C GCSE grades including mathematics and English was below average. GCSE results were affected by many factors, including pupils with a history of poor attendance and the number of pupils who joined the school midway through Key Stage 4. Some of these pupils required a high level of support with their behaviour. The progress of pupils who had attended the school from Year 9 onwards shows that they made progress in line with that nationally in English and mathematics.
- The vast majority of pupils take pride in their work, and its quality confirms that, over time, they are making good progress. Work in English books indicates that all pupils in Year 11 are on track to achieve or exceed their expected grades. The same level of progress was seen in religious education, geography and modern foreign languages. Pupils achieve high-level skills in physical education.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils has improved over the last three years. The highly effective support they receive from teachers and through one-to-one or small-group work in 'The ARC', means the gap between their achievement and their peers nationally and with those in school has narrowed considerably.
- The special educational needs team has a clear understanding of the needs of individual pupils and well-targeted support is in place. As a result, the progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good.
- The school has a significant number of pupils from minority ethnic groups and whose first language is other than English. Traditionally, many of these pupils have not made as much progress as their peers. Due to the improved support, these pupils are now making good progress across all subjects.
- Pupils have opportunities to read a range of different books and most are confident readers. Year 7 pupils told inspectors that they enjoy their ERIC (everyone reads in class) sessions. The extra support provided for pupils who have fallen behind in their reading is highly effective because they rapidly make good progress. Inspectors listened to these pupils read and found they were able to tackle challenging words and were keen to discuss their meaning.
- The school uses progress data to quickly identify pupils who are falling behind in their learning. These pupils, along with those who enter with low levels of literacy and numeracy, receive helpful support and soon catch up with their learning.
- The school has a smaller than average proportion of pupils who are most able. Although the number of pupils gaining A* and A grades at GCSE rose in 2015, teachers do not always set work that is demanding enough for these pupils. As a result, they make expected rather than more than expected progress. Scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's progress data indicate that progress is now improving for these pupils.
- The school ensures all pupils receive high-quality careers advice and support. Pupils told inspectors how valuable they have found this support when choosing examination courses or college placements. As a result, all pupils progress to the sixth form or a college placement at the end of Year 11.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- The sixth form accepts pupils of all abilities and provides a range of Level 2 and 3 courses that suit pupils wishing to follow vocational or academic courses.
- In previous years, some pupils have been accepted onto A-level courses without gaining at least a grade B GCSE in the subject they are studying. As a result, the proportion of pupils gaining higher grades at A level has been below average. The school now ensures that pupils have appropriate grades for the courses they are studying. In 2015, the proportion of pupils gaining three A levels at grade A or B increased on previous years.
- Pupils typically enter the sixth form with grades below the national average. The progress of pupils taking vocational qualifications continues to be good. As a result, the attainment for pupils taking Level 3 BTEC subjects is consistently above average. The gap between the achievement of pupils studying academic and vocational courses is narrowing. Work seen in lessons confirms that pupils are making good progress.
- The school makes good provision for those who need to retake their GCSE in English and mathematics. As a result, almost all pupils improve on their Year 11 result by at least one grade, and the proportion who achieve a grade C or above in both subjects is above that found nationally.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good because teachers have good knowledge of both the subject and the examination requirements. They have high expectations of pupils and set them challenging activities. Pupils are given plenty of opportunity to practise exam questions so that they are familiar with the marking requirements. Teachers provide pupils with detailed feedback in order for them to improve their work.
- Most pupils progress from Year 12 to Year 13. Some pupils who have followed Level 2 courses leave to go to college to study specialist vocational courses. All pupils who leave Year 12 go on to further education or training.
- Pupils all have the opportunity to participate in work experience and most undertake activities related to their career interest or course choice. The school is aware that for some pupils' work experience needs to be planned in more detail so that it relates more to their areas of learning.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good because the head of sixth form and her team have high expectations of the pupils. The progress of pupils is tracked rigorously and if a pupil falls behind with their studies swift and effective action is taken to help them catch up. The pupils are highly complimentary about the support they receive.
- Leaders ensure that sixth form pupils learn in a safe environment. A bus is provided for pupils who have lessons at Stewart House study centre to ensure safety between the two sites.
- Pupils receive high-quality careers advice and support with their university and job applications. They told inspectors how much they appreciated the work of both their tutors and the careers advisor. Pupils in Year 13 are all encouraged to apply to university and attend higher education fairs and visit university and higher education establishments.
- Over half of the pupils who left Year 13 in 2015 went on to university, with a small number progressing to the top Russell Group universities. Other pupils went on to higher education establishments, apprenticeships or employment. The very small number of pupils who are not yet placed continue to receive support from the careers advisor and the school.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is exemplary as pupils have very positive attitudes towards their studies. They act as positive role models for younger pupils.
- The school ensures that sixth form pupils are safe. The personal, social and health education programme ensures that pupils have information about how to keep themselves safe so that they are able to make informed lifestyle decisions.
- Pupils have opportunities to develop their leadership and personal skills through a range of activities. Pupils told inspectors how much they value the opportunities provided for them by the school. The Head Boy and Head Girl run the pupil forum and represent the pupils on the governing body. A large proportion of pupils have chosen to be pupil mentors, and after receiving training they work with pupils in the main school supporting them with their learning and behaviour or providing a 'listening ear'.

School details

Unique reference number	109690
Local authority	Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10001960

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	875
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	270
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carole Bell
Headteacher	David Bailey
Telephone number	01234 342521
Website	www.biddenham.sch.beds.uk
Email address	enquiries@biddenham.beds.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–27 September 2013

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- A higher than average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below the national average.
- In 2015, the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils by the end of Year 11.
- There is a study centre for sixth form pupils in Bromham Road, approximately one mile from the main school. Some sixth form teaching is carried out at this centre.
- At the time of this inspection, there were no pupils being educated off-site. However, the school has links with a range of providers who deliver alternative education should the need arise. These include: Bedford College, KWS Educational Services, First Place Training and Burnell Training for Life.
- The Sanctuary is a medical unit provided by the school. A qualified nurse deals with minor injuries that may occur during the school day. The Sanctuary provides support for pupils with long-term medical conditions, enabling them to continue with their education.
- The school is part of the Biddenham Campus Trust which is made up of Great Denham Primary School, Westfield Middle School and The PLACE Support Programme (a unit for elective home-educating families).

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 36 lessons to observe learning. Senior staff accompanied inspectors to six of these observations. The inspectors also looked at the work in pupils' books in lessons and conducted three work scrutinies. Inspectors completed two learning walks to look at learning across a range of subjects.
- Inspectors listened to a group of Year 7 pupils read and talked with them about their reading.
- A formal discussion was held with a group of pupils, along with informal conversations with others at break and lunchtime.
- A range of documents were examined, including the school's analysis of its own work and its improvement plan, information on pupils' academic progress and documents relating to the quality of teaching, staff training, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, the head of sixth form, eight members of the governing body and the senior schools improvement advisor from the local authority.
- The inspection team took account of the 70 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and a phone call from a parent.
- The inspection team received and considered the views of the 56 staff who completed questionnaires.

Inspection team

Caroline Parry, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Diana Osagie	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Pemberton	Ofsted Inspector
Kevin Sadler	Ofsted Inspector

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