

Millbrook Academy

Mill Lane, Brockworth, Gloucester GL3 4QF

Inspection dates

17–18 November 2015

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Historic poor leadership since the academy's previous inspection has resulted in rapidly declining outcomes.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate. Teachers fail to plan learning which sufficiently supports or challenges pupils.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils are able to achieve are too low. The most-able pupils are not given opportunities to think more deeply about their learning; this limits the progress they make.
- Disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make poor progress. Their individual needs are not sufficiently met by teachers.
- Pupils lack confidence and are unsure of how to be successful learners; their behaviour requires improvement. They do not always engage positively in their learning, in particular when teaching fails to inspire them.
- Teachers' feedback to pupils does not inform them of what they have done well and what they need to do to improve further.
- Leaders have not improved the quality of teaching quickly enough. They have an overgenerous view of the quality of teaching. They do not link teaching closely enough to the impact it has on pupils' outcomes.
- The 16 to 19 study programmes are inadequate. Learners do not receive adequate provision for GCSE English and mathematics retakes.
- The academy Trust has not acted swiftly enough to stem the declining standards and quality of teaching at the academy.
- Governors have been ineffective. They have failed to hold leaders to account for the poor performance of the academy.

The school has the following strengths

- The Interim Principal has stabilised the daily workings of the school and raised staff morale.
- The Trust has, through the new Regional Director of Education for the Academies Enterprise Trust, taken decisive action to remove ineffective leaders at the academy in the last year.
- Pupils are well cared for and feel safe.
- The Trust, through the Regional Director and Executive Principal, has an accurate view of what needs to be done to improve the academy.
- Pupils make better progress in art, performing arts and physical education as a result of good teaching in these subjects.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that teachers:
 - accurately understand what pupils can and cannot do
 - plan learning which sufficiently challenges pupils
 - consistently develop pupils' literacy skills
 - make clear to pupils what they are learning and why
- inform pupils how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their learning further.
- Rapidly improve pupils' outcomes by ensuring that:
 - teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - the individual needs of disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are effectively met
 - the most-able pupils are encouraged to think more deeply about their learning
- effective provision is in place for GCSE English and mathematics retakes in the sixth form.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders accurately evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by linking it closely to the impact it has on pupils' outcomes
 - subject leaders rigorously monitor and evaluate their departments to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - the management board provides robust challenge and support to leaders to accelerate the rate of improvement.

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

An external review of the academy's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Historic poor leadership since the previous inspection has seen all aspects of the academy decline rapidly; pupils underachieve and the quality of teaching is inadequate. A culture of low expectation exists across the academy; pupils are capable of so much more. In the past, the academy Trust and governors have failed to act swiftly to halt this decline.
- Some leaders' views of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are overgenerous. Too little attention is paid to the impact teaching has on pupils' outcomes. As a result of this, not enough is being done to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment urgently.
- It is strongly recommended that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.
- Subject leaders do not effectively monitor their departments to ensure a greater consistency of teaching, learning and assessment and to speed up the progress pupils make. A wide variation exists across the academy in the quality of feedback to pupils; subject leaders are not rigorously holding teachers to account when their practice is weak.
- Extra government funding for disadvantaged pupils has not been used effectively in the past. Governors have failed in their duty to monitor this spending and this group of pupils significantly underachieves compared to their peers. Recent leadership changes in this area have seen a renewed focus on these pupils. Plans are in place to meet pupils' needs better; these plans, though, are at a very early stage of implementation and, as yet, no impact is evident.
- Recent changes to the curriculum enable more-able pupils to follow a more appropriate range of subjects. Historically, however, the range of subjects offered has been too narrow and has not enabled pupils to achieve their potential. The poor teaching across the curriculum results in too few pupils realising their potential; too many are not able to pursue, or are ill-prepared for, the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Pupils appreciate the range of extra opportunities they are able to access outside normal lessons and speak highly of the art, performing arts and physical education departments. Pupils receive regular opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education well through the arts, tutor programme and visiting speakers. Most pupils have a good understanding of different cultures and they readily accept people of differing faiths, backgrounds and cultures. The overall quality of this education is, however, inconsistent as it depends on the quality of the tutor who teaches the content.
- The Interim Principal, since his appointment, has re-established stability in the daily workings of the school and has raised staff morale. Most staff who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire indicated that they are proud to be a member of staff at the school. The Interim Principal has recently implemented robust procedures to hold staff firmly to account for their performance in the classroom. Prior to this, however, no effective processes were in place.
- Since her recent appointment, the Regional Director (RD) for Education of the Academies Enterprise Trust has taken swift action to remove ineffective leaders at the academy. Alongside the Regional Schools Commissioner, helpful support from local schools has been put in place to develop the quality of teaching in English and mathematics and to improve the quality of leadership at all levels.
- The RD and the Executive Principal, new to post in October 2015, have a very clear understanding of the significant issues that exist in the academy. They fully understand the urgency that is needed to rapidly improve the quality of education that the academy provides.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance is inadequate. Since the previous inspection, governors failed to halt, or understand, the rapid decline in most aspects of the academy. Governors accepted inaccurate evaluations on the academy by previous leaders; they failed to challenge highly inflated predictions of pupils' outcomes. Governors failed to hold leaders and teachers to account for their poor performance. They did not use extra government funding appropriately and the pupils who were entitled to this underachieved.
 - The RD, rightly, dissolved the governing body in January 2015 due to its lack of ability to govern the academy effectively. The RD has put in place a management board, chaired by herself, and has recruited people with key educational skills and understanding to sit on this board. The management board is clear about its responsibility to improve the effectiveness of the academy as a matter of urgency.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The designated safeguarding lead ensures that all staff are regularly trained and updated on key safeguarding policies and practice. Staff are vigilant and vulnerable pupils are closely monitored to ensure that they are safe.
- The academy's record keeping is of a high quality. Leaders work effectively with external agencies and parents to ensure that pupils receive appropriate support when needed.
- The checks made on staff working at the academy are comprehensive.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to the online Parent View survey feel that their child is safe at the academy.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- Teachers' expectations are too low. They have an inaccurate view of what pupils can and cannot do. As a result, their planning does not sufficiently challenge pupils, which limits the progress that they make.
- Effective learning routines are not well established, which results in lessons proceeding at a slow pace and too much learning time being lost. For example, pupils are not encouraged to settle quickly and teachers do not ensure that pupils are quiet when they are explaining key learning points. Pupils are then unclear as to what they are learning and why.
- The individual needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are poorly planned for. Too few teachers provide these pupils with the support they need, even though key information on effective strategies to support each pupil is readily available.
- Pupils work through routine problems with some success, but are unable to link together different areas of each subject. Therefore their learning lacks depth and understanding. Extension activities fail to develop pupils' learning appropriately.
- Too often, teachers' assessment is weak. Pupils do not receive effective feedback to enable them to understand what they have done well and what they need to do to improve further. Inconsistency exists across the academy in applying the agreed marking policy.
- Pupils' literacy skills are not developed well. Teachers do not ensure that key literacy concepts and expectations are consistently applied. Teachers do not demand high enough expectations of the presentation of pupils' work.
- The individual needs of disadvantaged pupils are not well met. Too many teachers do not show an understanding of how to engage them fully in their learning to improve the progress they make.
- Where teaching is effective, teachers exude passion and deep subject knowledge. Pupils respond positively to this and have high aspirations. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very positive and lessons proceed at a good pace; learning time is maximised. For example, in an art lesson, the teacher modelled effectively the quality of work she expected and spoke knowledgeably about her subject. Pupils were inspired to learn and had a deep understanding of how they could adapt their work to reach aspirational targets. Pupils worked quickly and discussed key concepts and ideas with each other to develop their learning further.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils lack confidence and are not resilient. They give up too easily and do not understand how to be successful learners.
- Pupils are well cared for. Individual pupils' needs are well known by the care staff. The pupil services team monitors vulnerable pupils closely to ensure that they are happy and safe. Good-quality extra support is in place to develop pupils' social and emotional skills.
- Sixth form learners lead an effective 'Visions' programme, of which they are rightly proud. They deliver sessions and hold drop-in and website discussions to provide effective support for pupils' physical and emotional well-being. The programme is highly valued and fully utilised by pupils.
- Pupils fully understand different types of bullying and know how to keep themselves safe. Useful links are made with current news stories to further develop pupils' understanding of radicalisation and other

potential risks. Pupils have confidence that staff will deal effectively with any concerns they raise.

- Pupils have access to helpful careers guidance which gives them some understanding of their choices and options. However, leaders do not clearly understand this aspect of the academy's work and what help each pupil is entitled to in the course of their time at the academy. Most pupils do, however, move onto education, training or employment at the end of Year 11.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- When teaching fails to inspire, motivate or sufficiently challenge pupils, they can become distracted and disinterested. However, where teachers inspire pupils, they respond very positively and enjoy their learning.
- Around the school site, boys sometimes behave boisterously, although pupils feel safe. The school site is well kept and respected. Pupils generally wear their uniform well.
- Since his arrival, the Interim Principal has raised expectations of pupils' behaviour. He takes a firm stance on unacceptable behaviour. As a result, pupils' behaviour has improved, although the proportion of pupils who receive a fixed-term exclusion has risen due to the Interim Principal's firm stance.
- Leaders work closely with pupils and parents to ensure the importance of attendance is thoroughly understood. Clear processes are in place to tackle poor attendance and to provide personalised support if needed. Attendance is rising and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school has declined.
- A small number of pupils in Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 access some of their education at alternative providers. The school monitors these pupils closely to ensure that they attend and behave well and feel safe. The attendance of these pupils has risen.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- Outcomes across the academy have declined rapidly since the previous inspection in 2013. The proportion of pupils at the end of Year 11 attaining five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, was very low in both 2014 and 2015.
- Work in books across the academy shows that pupils are not making enough progress. Leaders focus much of their attention in Year 11 to intervene with pupils who are underachieving as a result of historic poor teaching. Pupils do not make enough progress across Key Stage 3.
- Too few pupils make the progress expected of them in both English and mathematics. This impedes pupils' opportunities at the next stage of their education, employment and training as too many do not attain the grades required to pursue more academic courses at post-16.
- Teachers' tracking and predictions of pupils' performance have been wholly unreliable and overinflated. Leaders have implemented more rigour through using leaders at other schools to validate teachers' judgements; this is leading to a more accurate understanding of pupils' current progress. Very recent introduction of baseline assessments enable teachers to have a better understanding of pupils' skills and knowledge on entry in Year 7.
- Pupils make better progress in art, performing arts and physical education. This is as a result of good teaching, learning and assessment in these subjects and of the subject leaders having high expectations of their teachers and pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils make very poor progress. Their individual needs are not sufficiently met by teachers and extra support is not used effectively to help raise their outcomes. The gap between their attainment and their peers nationally is very wide; this gap shows no sign of closing.
- The special educational needs department is well led. Leaders and teaching assistants know each pupil's needs well. Helpful extra support is provided to raise pupils' reading and writing proficiency, particularly for those entering the academy with low levels of attainment. This support, however, is not consolidated by teachers in their classrooms, which leads to these pupils making similar poor progress to that of their peers.
- The most-able pupils are not routinely encouraged to think more deeply about their learning. This limits the progress they are able to make. Too often, the most-able learners fail to be suitably challenged by their teachers. They do not make enough progress and the proportion who achieve the highest grades of A*/A is too low.

16 to 19 study programmes

are inadequate

- The requirements of the 16 to 19 study programmes are not met. In particular, learners who enter the sixth form without a grade C at GCSE level in English and/or mathematics do not receive sufficient timetabled teaching to enable them to achieve this grade. Very few learners achieve a grade C in English or mathematics following their retaking of the examinations.
- Leaders do not fully understand the quality of teaching in the sixth form, which is inconsistent. In 2014, learners did not make enough progress in academic or work related courses. Outcomes in 2015 rose slightly, but learners still do not achieve well enough.
- The level of advice and guidance for learners, including careers guidance and the development of their employability skills, is inconsistent. Year 12 learners are positive about the support they receive. Year 13 learners, however, feel poorly supported and ill-prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- The proportion of learners who remain in the sixth form from the end of Year 12 to the start of Year 13 has declined. However, most learners who complete Year 13 progress to higher education, employment or training.
- The curriculum offer is narrow in the sixth form as a result of the very small numbers that attend the sixth form. There is a lack of opportunities for learners to take part in enriching activities outside normal timetabled lessons.
- Learners behave well and understand how to manage their personal, emotional and healthy well-being. Learners enjoy opportunities to develop their workplace skills, in particular through developing the 'Visions' programme for working with younger learners to develop their social, emotional, physical and mental health. The attendance of sixth form learners is improving.

School details

Unique reference number	137690
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10002434

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	544
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	66
Appropriate authority	Management board
Chair of the Management Board	Libby Nicholas
Interim Principal	Roger Gilbert
Telephone number	01452 863372
Website	https://sites.google.com/a/aetinet.org/millbrook-academy/home
Email address	contactus@millbrookacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	3–4 October 2013

Information about this school

- Millbrook Academy is a smaller-than-average sized secondary school. It is sponsored by the Academies Enterprise Trust.
- An Interim Principal took up post in March 2015 and an Executive Principal started in October 2015.
- Following the appointment of a new Regional Director for Education for the Academies Enterprise Trust, the governing body was dismissed. A management board has been put in place to manage the day-to-day running of the school.
- The academy receives significant support from staff within the Academies Enterprise Trust, Broadlands Academy and the Crypt School.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is above average. This is additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is higher than the national average.
- The academy does not meet the current government floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Some pupils access part of their education at Raikes, The Military Preparation Training College, The Bridge and at some work experience placements. Around two-thirds of the sixth form are educated solely at Virtual Learning UK in conjunction with Cheltenham Town Football Club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 31 lessons. Many of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also made short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with the Interim Principal, the Executive Principal, senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils, a member of the management board and the Regional Director of Education for the Academies Enterprise Trust.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation including information on pupils' outcomes, the academy's self-evaluation, minutes of meetings, records relating to the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment, behaviour and the safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in lessons and observed their conduct at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors took account of 47 responses to the online Parent View survey and 42 staff questionnaire returns.

Inspection team

Simon Rowe, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Richard Steward	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Williams	Ofsted Inspector

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