

Margaret Beaufort Middle School

High Street, Riseley, Bedford MK44 1DR

Inspection dates 15–16 December 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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and other leaders have established a culture in which the needs of each pupil inform the work of all. Each pupil is valued, cared for and well supported. This promotes the learning and personal development of all.
- Outcomes for pupils are good because they make rapid progress across very many subjects from their starting point at the academy. Outcomes in English and mathematics are notably strong for all groups of pupils.
- Leaders have ensured that disadvantaged pupils make as much progress as their peers and achieve outcomes that are typically higher than those of other pupils nationally.
- Teachers very often use techniques that engage pupils and inspire them to work hard and think deeply, particularly in English and mathematics. Leaders are ensuring that overall, the quality of teaching continues to improve.
- The quality of pupils' behaviour makes a strong contribution to their learning in many lessons. They rarely miss school and are typically polite and welcoming.
- Disabled pupils and pupils who have special educational needs make good progress from their individual starting points because they are well supported. The academy's leaders are successful in helping those who find it difficult to manage their behaviour to improve it over time.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils benefit from a broad curriculum that makes a substantial contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' personal development is promoted exceptionally well.
- Pupils are kept safe, and learn within a community characterised by tolerance and mutual respect.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teachers do not always set pupils work that is sufficiently challenging, or provide feedback that shows them how to develop their subject-specific skills further. This prevents some from making even better progress.
- A minority of Key Stage 3 pupils make basic spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors because some teachers do not promote the importance of written accuracy effectively.
- A very small minority of pupils do not demonstrate the same good behaviour as the overwhelming majority. Some do not work equally hard across the range of subjects that they study, which means their progress, though good overall, is uneven.
- The recently reconstituted governing body has not yet fully developed the ability to hold leaders to account for the quality of outcomes in all areas of the academy's work.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teachers in all subjects set pupils activities that are appropriately challenging
 - feedback in all subjects enables pupils to develop their subject-specific knowledge, skills and understanding, in line with the academy's policy
 - all teachers reinforce the need for pupils to work hard, and to spell, punctuate and use grammar accurately, in all subjects.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - developing the governing body's ability to provide support and challenge to leaders in all aspects of the academy's work.

- Improve personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that all teachers develop and use strategies that improve the behaviour of a very small minority of pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher and other leaders have established a community with a caring ethos, and one that ensures that each pupil has the chance to achieve the best possible academic outcomes, and to develop their interests and personal capabilities fully.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the quality and impact of teaching across the academy, and know where it is very effective and where it is less so. They have developed a culture in which teachers share successful strategies and are encouraged to try out new ideas and techniques in the classroom and evaluate their impact. The academy makes a considerable investment in ongoing training for teachers. Over time, this culture and investment have helped many teachers to develop techniques that promote pupils' engagement and progress.
- Leaders set high expectations and manage teachers' performance robustly. Teachers' targets are linked closely to improving pupils' outcomes. This helps to improve the quality of teaching, but in a few cases the success criteria that are set do not communicate precisely what needs to change, happen or improve if the target is to be met. This limits their effectiveness.
- Subject leaders play an important role in improving the quality and impact of teaching in their areas. For example, pupils make a strong start in English and mathematics when they join the academy, and leave ready for GCSE study because leaders work with others in the middle and upper schools to plan courses well. Leaders establish the accuracy of the grades or marks applied to assessed work in these subjects by ensuring that they are checked by staff in other schools.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and enables pupils to make good or better progress. Leaders have adapted the curriculum so that pupils can study a wide range of subjects before they have to choose their GCSE options in upper school. These options include Spanish, German, dance, drama and business studies.
- Provision for disabled pupils and pupils who have special educational needs is very effective. Leaders analyse these pupils' needs carefully. They help teachers to plan activities that support these pupils' progress, which is often rapid. The special educational needs coordinator ensures that individuals who have long-term medical needs receive appropriate work to do when they are absent, and helps them to reintegrate when they are well enough. This supports their continuing progress well.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is promoted very well. Many pupils contribute to the academy community, for example as prefects, sports leaders, observers of learning and peer mentors. Many engage in charitable activity; a significant number donate the monetary value of the rewards they receive for good behaviour to charity. A wide range of activities and visits, including different fortnightly 'faith themes', helps to broaden pupils' horizons and promote their understanding of other cultures and their tolerance of other lifestyles and beliefs. These, together with participation in democratic processes, help prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.
- Older pupils receive good guidance about what to consider when choosing their GCSE options. They gain good insights through their business education, and through practical activities learn about some of the ways to calculate business costs and to work as a team to generate a profit. Work to inform them about different careers and how they might gain entry to them in the future is less systematic.
- Leaders make highly effective use of the academy's pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils. Careful monitoring of their progress helps identify the specific aspects of subject content or skills for which they need more help or challenge. One-to-one tuition is effective in moving pupils forward; leaders check the impact of it carefully and regularly and make changes as necessary. This ensures that these pupils make progress that is at least in line with that of others.
- Leaders use additional sports funding well to increase pupils' participation rates across a range of sporting activities. Pupils are very enthusiastic about physical education; large numbers regularly engage in cross-country events, for example, and sports clubs, including the weekly dance club, are well attended. The academy's teams enjoy considerable success in local- and county-level competitions.
- This academy, and the others within the Sharnbrook Academy Federation, work together to plan transition from lower to middle, and from middle to upper school, effectively. Teachers from across the federation's academies take part in joint training events. These have helped to strengthen the teaching of mathematics and English especially.

■ The governance of the school

- Recent changes to the overall structure of governance within the federation mean that the academy's local governing body now has a greater degree of oversight of standards than previously. Consequently, governors' ability to support and challenge senior leaders about some aspects of the academy's work is evolving; governors recognise this and have arranged for a review of their work to take place.
 - Governors' support and challenge have been most effective around safeguarding, behaviour and provision in mathematics and English. Governors have a less secure understanding of standards within other subject areas. Plans are in place to extend the scope of governors' visits to the academy by linking governors to specific subjects, so that they are better able to hold all subject leaders to account.
 - The governing body ensures that the academy's performance management policy is applied appropriately.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pre-employment checks are rigorous and the academy's safeguarding provision meets statutory requirements. Records are maintained and are complete. Adults in the academy understand how to identify and raise concerns because they are regularly trained, including in how to spot and tackle any possible extremist behaviour. Leaders are proactive in their work with external agencies; any concerns about individual pupils are followed up quickly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching is particularly strong in mathematics and English, and good across many subjects including physical education and information and communication technology (ICT). Teachers usually have high expectations and insist that these are met. Pupils respond with enthusiasm and demonstrate a real commitment to learning because activities are interesting and, in the words of one, generally 'hard enough to test you, but not so hard that you give up'. Teachers often use their expert subject knowledge to show pupils how to work things out, step by step; during a Year 7 mathematics lesson, this helped pupils to understand how to factorise.
- Some teachers evidence their own fascination with their subjects; this is infectious and pupils share it. Over time, challenging questioning and other techniques help pupils to develop their thinking and deepen their understanding. During a Year 8 English lesson, pupils were able to analyse a complex piece of poetry and engaged in a high-level conversation about the ways in which the poet conveyed mood and meaning. The depth of their analysis and perception evidenced the considerable impact of teaching over time.
- Teachers usually make good use of assessment information to plan lesson activities that provide the appropriate level of challenge for different groups of pupils. In mathematics, teachers track pupils' progress very carefully through assessing work and careful questioning during lessons. They use the information this gives them to spot and address pupils' misconceptions quickly. Teachers understand when pupils have grasped a key mathematical skill and give them the chance to deepen their learning by applying it to real-life problems.
- In many subjects, teachers develop pupils' literacy skills well. For example, in history, work in Year 8 pupils' books indicates their growing confidence in presenting a question response appropriately in an essay format. Many can convey their argument with clarity, explaining their points and supporting them with well-chosen evidence. Across subjects, a significant proportion can use appropriate academic or subject-specific language in ways that help demonstrate their knowledge and the depth of their thinking. These pupils are being well prepared for future GCSE study.
- Teachers usually follow the academy's policy when providing feedback. It is often highly useful to pupils, who gain precise, subject-specific information about what they need to correct or how they can improve. Many teachers ensure that pupils are able to act on the advice, and the impact on their progress is evident. However, sometimes pupils choose not to respond, or receive feedback that lacks this clarity. They continue to make the same mistakes as a result. Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that sometimes work is marked over-generously, so pupils have a misleading impression of how well they have done.

- When teaching is less effective, pupils experience limited challenge, or they are moved on to the next task too quickly before they have had the chance to deepen their understanding. A very small number sometimes drift off task and disrupt the learning of others. A small number of teachers do not always stop this quickly, so the pace of learning slows.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils can spell, use punctuation and apply grammatical conventions with accuracy by the time they complete Key Stage 2. However, some teachers do not reinforce the need for such accuracy consistently. As a result, a small but significant minority of pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 do not take enough care over this important aspect of their written work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The academy's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils' attendance is very high; it has increased significantly over the past three years largely because of the pupil support and attendance coordinator's tireless and highly effective work. Leaders make clear to parents the impact that low attendance has on pupils' progress over time, and very careful monitoring enables them to spot unhelpful patterns of absence quickly and take effective action. As a result, the attendance of all groups of pupils, including those who attend alternative provision, is above average. Very few pupils are persistently absent.
- Pupils quickly establish excellent relationships with their teachers, other adults and each other. This is partly because leaders work well with lower schools before the pupils move up, and gain detailed information about each individual. This means that teachers know pupils' strengths and weaknesses in key subject areas before they begin, so they can plan work that allows them to make a strong and confident start. Leaders also use this information to provide effective support to those who might otherwise find moving schools difficult.
- The very high standards that pupils achieve in English and mathematics by the end of Year 8 benefit their personal development. This is because the skills of high-level thinking and reasoning that they develop aid their learning in other subjects. Pupils learn how to give each other constructive feedback on their work in these subjects because teachers train them in these skills effectively.
- Pupils value the experiences they gain, and the skills and levels of confidence that they develop via the posts of responsibility that many hold. During the inspection, for example, two pupils who regularly observe lessons and discuss teaching and learning with senior leaders accompanied inspectors to classes. They were able to speak with real insight about the impact of the teaching that they saw on learning. Others serve as sports captains, 'bus buddies', anti-bullying 'ambassadors' and pupil counsellors. They take these responsibilities seriously and express their pride in the difference they make to others.
- The headteacher's ethos, shared by all, is that 'we refuse to give up on any child'. During the inspection, a number of parents contacted inspectors to talk about the effectiveness of the support leaders and teachers give to pupils who have long-term medical conditions, or who find it difficult to manage their behaviour, or who join the academy having experienced difficulties at their previous school.
- The overwhelming majority of parents indicate that their children feel safe at the academy. All pupils who spoke to inspectors agreed; they told inspectors that there is always someone they can talk to if they have a difficulty; one explained that 'there is always a teacher to help you'.
- Pupils know how to recognise and minimise a variety of risks, including when using the internet. Parents are kept very well informed about such matters via the fortnightly e-safety bulletins, the academy's website and the opportunity, taken by many, to attend information evenings. Leaders have done much to promote road safety.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The overwhelming majority of pupils behave well in almost all lessons. In many, behaviour aids learning to a very positive degree because pupils are highly engaged and want to learn. They follow teachers' instructions quickly, apply themselves well, and show an active interest in what they are doing. This was particularly evident during the business and enterprise fair that involved the whole academy during the morning of the second day of this inspection. The academy's monitoring records indicate that pupils who attend alternative provision behave well.

- Pupils very often work highly productively with others to share ideas, debate, discuss and assess each other's work. They almost always show respect for each other while doing so, stay on task, and help each other to learn. Inspectors saw examples of the confidence this gives individuals to offer ideas they might not be sure about. These often help to deepen the understanding of others or alert the teacher to an area of misunderstanding.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of bullying and its consequences. They report that it is very rare, and dealt with effectively because, in the words of one pupil, 'there are anti-bullying ambassadors and teachers who sort it out'. The academy's monitoring information confirms this. Racial incidents seldom occur, and pupils say that there is very little use of homophobic or otherwise unacceptable language.
- Pupils usually move about the site purposefully and peaceably, though a few mentioned to inspectors that pushing sometimes occurs in corridors. Pupils mix well at break- and lunchtimes.
- Disruption to learning occurs in a small minority of lessons, when a few pupils become distracted and sometimes talk over the teacher or each other. This can slow the pace of learning. Usually, teachers make effective use of the academy's behaviour policy. Pupils are quick to alert senior leaders when they have concerns about behaviour.
- Inspectors' scrutiny of work in books indicates that a small minority of pupils do not take opportunities to improve their work even when teachers prompt them to do so, and make very clear what pupils need to improve and how to do so. A minority present their work well in some subjects, and clearly apply much effort when completing it; in other subjects, the same pupils produce work that is sometimes rushed and scruffy. Some teachers do not challenge this effectively.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils enter the academy at the beginning of Year 5 and leave at the end of Year 8. On arrival, pupils undertake externally moderated assessments. The results of these demonstrate that pupils arrive with skills and knowledge that are at least in line with those of their peers, and in many cases above them. The academy's monitoring information indicates that pupils make substantial and sustained progress in English and mathematics across the four years that they attend the academy. Inspectors' scrutiny of books indicated that this is the case for current pupils.
- Historically, attainment at the end of Year 6 has been significantly higher than national averages because of the strong progress pupils make. In 2015, by the end of Year 6 pupils had made very strong progress in mathematics, reading and writing from their individual starting points in their two years at the academy.
- During the inspection, scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that, over time, the overwhelming majority make strong progress across a wide range of subjects at both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 because of the effective teaching that they receive. However, a minority of pupils do not make consistently strong progress across the subjects that they study.
- Pupils demonstrate their ability to spell, punctuate and use grammatical conventions appropriately in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2. However, a minority of pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 do not apply these skills as accurately as they should in all of their subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils make progress that is in line with their peers in reading, writing and mathematics, and better progress than other pupils nationally. The academy's monitoring information indicates that they make good or better progress in line with their peers in other subjects across the curriculum. This was evident in the work of these pupils.
- Disabled pupils and pupils who have special educational needs make at least good progress across all year groups due to the effective teaching and support that they receive.
- The most-able pupils make very good progress in English and mathematics. However, inspectors' scrutiny of the work of these pupils indicates that in other subjects, including science and geography, some make good progress but less than they might, because the work that they complete is not always sufficiently challenging.

School details

Unique reference number	136475
Local authority	Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10005601

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	351
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hugh Carr-Archer
Headteacher	Paul Ives
Telephone number	01234 708213
Website	www.margaretbeaufort.org.uk
Email address	admin@margaretbeaufort.beds.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	June 2012

Information about this school

- Margaret Beaufort is an above-average-sized, middle-deemed-secondary academy, which is part of the Sharnbrook Academy Federation.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through pupil premium funding is well below the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding given to schools for disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The academy currently uses three alternative providers: two hospitals and and Grey's Education Centre, Bedford.
- In 2014, the academy met the government's floor targets, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection converted from a short inspection to a full inspection to gather further evidence in order to determine the academy's effectiveness. One additional inspector joined the inspection on the second day of the inspection.
- Inspectors observed a wide range of learning activities across both key stages and in a range of subjects. These included 24 visits to lessons. A large number of pupils' books and files from different year groups and subjects were considered. Inspectors listened to several pupils read.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders. Inspectors met with several middle leaders and members of the governing body, including the Chair. A meeting was also held with the Executive Principal of Sharnbrook Academy Federation. Inspectors also met with several groups of pupils and spoke to them informally throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors took into account 101 parental responses expressed through the online survey, Parent View.
- The inspection team scrutinised information about achievement and the assessment of learning. They examined records relating to behaviour and attendance, and looked at documents used by leaders to monitor and evaluate the academy's work.
- A review of safeguarding records and procedures was carried out.

Inspection team

Jason Howard, lead inspector

Carol Lynn Lowery

Peter Sewell

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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