

# Gamlingay Village College

Station Road, Gamlingay, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 3HD

<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 June 2016
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Governors have used their good understanding of how well the school is doing to challenge leaders to make the necessary improvements to the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The new headteacher is an effective leader who has raised the expectations of staff and pupils and brought about improvements in the quality of teaching. This has led to rapidly increasing rates of progress for pupils.
- Information on how well pupils are doing is accurate and used well by teachers to address gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are positive. Pupils' behaviour is good and pupils enjoy attending school.
- Teaching is effective across a range of subjects, including mathematics, English, the arts and humanities.
- The small numbers of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported. They make good progress.
- The gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils at the school has closed significantly by the end of Year 8, especially in English.
- Senior leaders have the support and confidence of staff, pupils and parents.
- Pupils benefit from a varied curriculum and a wide range of opportunities to extend their experiences beyond the classroom.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although the quality of teaching has improved, there is not enough that challenges and enthuses pupils.
- Occasionally, learning is delayed because teachers' explanations to pupils are not clear enough.
- Middle leaders are not yet held fully to account for the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility.

## Full report

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

- Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management by developing the skills of middle leaders so that they lead improvements in the quality of teaching in their areas.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that more pupils make good and better progress, by making sure that:
  - all lessons challenge and enthuse pupils
  - all teachers explain tasks clearly to pupils and check that they understand so that time is not wasted
  - teachers insist that pupils use correct subject terminology so that their literacy improves and they have confidence when speaking and writing in all subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Governors acted decisively in response to disappointing Year 6 outcomes in the 2015 national tests by immediately strengthening the leadership of the school. A new headteacher and a new leader in mathematics started in September 2015, shortly followed by a new leader of English.
- The new headteacher promptly introduced changes to the way pupils are assessed so that information about how well they are doing is now accurate and is used to identify gaps in knowledge or skills caused by weaker teaching in the past. Subject leaders track carefully the progress pupils make and ensure that this information is used to support learning.
- The leadership of the new headteacher has raised the aspirations of both staff and pupils. He has united the staff in the drive for improvement and won the confidence of the majority of parents after a turbulent time for the school. Responses to the online staff questionnaires during the inspection showed that staff are supportive of the headteacher and his team. Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are appreciative of the positive changes they have seen in the school this year.
- A 'Good Learning Guide', introduced by the headteacher, has helped pupils to understand what they can do to increase the pace of their own learning. Pupils said that it had made clear what was expected of them. Teachers and pupils share the same high expectations for learning.
- The school has effective systems for monitoring and managing pupils' behaviour. School records show that incidents of poor behaviour have declined since the autumn term because pupils understand what is expected of them and staff are more consistent in the way they use sanctions and rewards. The small number of pupils who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour are given effective support by staff and other pupils to help them make a success of their time in class.
- A robust system to manage the performance of teachers is now in place with a clear focus on improving classroom practice and the progress of the pupils. Once targets are set, they are reviewed regularly but the system has yet to complete a full cycle.
- Subject leaders are held fully to account for the progress of all groups of pupils in all year groups. They carefully plan the curriculum from Year 5 to Year 8 so that each year builds on the skills taught in the previous one. This has not been the case in the past. As a result, there is more consistency in what pupils are taught and how they are taught. This means that gaps in their learning are addressed as they move through the school.
- The quality of teaching is monitored by the headteacher and a deputy headteacher from Stratton Upper School through regular lesson observations and by looking at the work in pupils' books. Those teachers identified as needing to improve are offered support that is tailored closely to their needs. Subject leaders do not routinely observe teaching or provide training and support for teachers, and so their impact on raising the standard of teaching has been limited.
- Support for disadvantaged pupils is effective. A proportion of the pupil premium funding has been used to encourage and support individual interests such as sport, music and art. The headteacher considers this an investment in the future of these pupils. It has increased the level of their engagement and their enjoyment of school, resulting in improved attendance and behaviour. Extra opportunities, such as Saturday morning tuition, have helped disadvantaged pupils to catch up with their peers so that gaps close rapidly.
- The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum and, by sharing some teachers with the local upper school, it is able to offer specialist teaching in subjects such as French to pupils in all year groups. The close relationship between the middle and upper school means that pupils in Year 8 are confident about moving on and are looking forward to the next phase of their education. Pupils learn about the different ways that people in modern Britain live their lives through religious education lessons and the personal, social, health and economic education curriculum. This enables them to explore and develop an understanding of the multicultural and diverse society that is modern Britain.
- The school provides a variety of clubs, trips and experiences for pupils. These include a French breakfast club, a Marimba group, a dance club and various other sporting activities both at lunchtime and after school. Year 8 pupils were particularly enthusiastic about their recent experience at the Lego Robotics Challenge where they were the youngest team competing.

- The primary physical education and sports premium funding has been used well to ensure that pupils have the chance to compete in tournaments and fixtures against other schools. Pupils told inspectors that they are beginning to be successful in these competitions. The purchase of tablets for use in physical education lessons has allowed pupils to evaluate their own recorded performances and so develop better technique.
- **The governance of the school**
  - In the past, governors relied too much on incorrect information on how well pupils were doing. They trusted the school's predictions for outcomes in national tests without means to ensure that they were accurate. The governors' task group now focuses on monitoring the levels of achievement of all groups of pupils in all subjects and requires the headteacher to justify the rates of progress pupils that are making. This has led to a much clearer picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, allowing governors to challenge and support more effectively.
  - Governors are ambitious for the school and are determined that achievement will continue to rise. The new performance management system, in place since September 2015, gives governors the opportunity to support the improvement of teaching and learning by rewarding good teachers and challenging underperformance through pay reviews.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are fully aware of the procedures to follow, should they have any concerns about the safety or care of pupils. Staff training is up to date. The school works effectively with local agencies to ensure that vulnerable children and their families are identified and supported. Parents agree that their children are safe and well cared for.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching is good and still improving. Teachers provide interesting activities for pupils that engage and stimulate them. Effective teaching was seen across subjects, in particular in mathematics, English, textiles and geography. The impact of this is seen in the rapid rates of progress in these subjects for all groups of pupils across all year groups.
- Teachers know how well their pupils are doing because assessments are regular and accurate. Where practice is strongest, this assessment information provides staff and parents with a very clear picture of how well each pupil is progressing. It is also used to inform planning to ensure that all pupils are challenged and so make good progress. Most teachers match tasks closely to the abilities of pupils and use questioning to engage learners and make them think.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils. Most manage behaviour in their classes well, creating a positive environment for learning. When pupils are suitably challenged, they become enthusiastic and absorbed in their learning, allowing them to make good progress. Occasionally, when activities do not really interest pupils, their concentration wanders and so the pace of their learning is slowed.
- Teachers are keen to improve their practice and are encouraged to work with colleagues from other local schools to develop their skills and share expertise. This is helping teaching to improve strongly.
- Weaker teaching in the past has affected the progress of some pupils in mathematics, especially those currently in Years 6 and 7. Mathematics teaching is improving because the new subject leader is using information on how well pupils are doing to identify when teaching needs to adapt to fill the gaps in knowledge that stall their learning. Pupils also have the opportunity to improve their confidence and skills in mathematics at the lunchtime maths club, in small-group work and during one-to-one tuition.
- A common focus on improving literacy and numeracy skills was seen across many subjects. Teachers use correct subject-specific language in lessons, although pupils' confidence in using it themselves is still developing. In most subjects, teachers correct spellings in line with the school's policy and this is having a positive impact on improving the accuracy of written work over time. Inspectors observed the weekly literacy and numeracy focus being addressed in lessons. For example, in an English lesson, the numeracy focus on time was cleverly inserted in a lesson on newspaper reports by insisting that pupils use time adverbials in their writing.
- Pupils' books are usually well presented and are marked regularly by teachers. Most of the advice given to pupils on how to improve their work is useful and pupils respond to this, which moves their learning on quickly.
- Most teachers explain activities to pupils clearly and use effective questioning to deepen their understanding. At times, teachers' explanations of tasks confuse pupils and so their learning is delayed while they work out what they have to do.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Pupils speak highly of their teachers and feel that they are all known as individuals. Pupils spoke confidently to inspectors about their school and the friendly atmosphere and community feel that it has.
- Pupils have the opportunity to be voted onto the school council and recently took part in their own referendum on the future of Britain's place in the European Union. This gives them an understanding of democracy and links to work done during personal, social, health and citizenship lessons on the rights and responsibilities of living in a modern British community.
- Pupils told inspectors that there is very little bullying in school, but that when it happens, they are confident that it will be dealt with promptly and effectively by teachers. Pupils feel safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe outside it. The curriculum provides opportunities to help them to avoid dangers, including work on healthy eating and exercise, drugs and alcohol, and relationships.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The vast majority of pupils meet the high expectations set by the school and move around the school site sensibly and considerately. They take good care of their environment. For example, there is no litter around the school building or grounds.
- Lessons are calm and purposeful and most pupils want to do well. Even when activities do not spark their curiosity or sense of discovery, most pupils still quietly complete the tasks their teachers give them. However, a few lose motivation and concentration because they either do not fully understand what they have to do or have not yet developed the confidence to manage their work without support.
- Attendance figures have been affected this year by an unusually high number of long-term medical issues; otherwise, attendance is above the national average. Pupils attend well because they enjoy coming to school. The attendance of all groups of pupils is monitored carefully and good attendance is rewarded.

## Outcomes for pupils

are good

- The progress that pupils make is improving rapidly. Better teaching and more accurate assessment that identifies when pupils need support are effectively addressing the negative impact that weaker teaching in the past has had on how well pupils achieve. A detailed scrutiny of pupils' work during the inspection shows a rapidly improving picture of achievement across subjects and year groups.
- In 2015, attainment in the national tests at Year 6 was in line with the national average in reading, writing and in mathematics. However, the progress pupils made across key stage 2 in mathematics and writing was well below the national average. The new headteacher's response to this was immediate and robust. Extra time for English and mathematics teaching in Year 6 this year has boosted the progress made by all groups of pupils. Across the school, improved teaching is closing gaps in pupils' learning and accelerating their progress.
- The school's focus on improving writing has ensured that pupils have far more opportunities to write at length. The quality of work in the Year 6 writing books is clear evidence of the impact of this strategy, and the proportion of pupils who have met or exceeded the 2015 national standards in writing has increased.
- The extra funding, which is provided by the government to help Year 7 pupils who did not attain the expected levels in English and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 to catch up with their peers, has been used to create smaller teaching groups in mathematics and English. Assessment information shows that by March 2016, some Year 7 pupils had already made a year's expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and the progress of all pupils had accelerated.

- Year-on-year comparison of the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils at the school is not helpful as the numbers of disadvantaged pupils are small and vary by year group. However, in 2015, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who attained at least a Level 4 in reading was above the national figure for other pupils. In the current Year 8, disadvantaged pupils have almost caught up with the progress made by their peers in English from the end of key stage 2 and have closed the gap in mathematics. This means that all Year 8 pupils are well prepared for the move to upper school.
- The small numbers of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with individual programmes that meet their needs well. This year, the progress these pupils are making from their varied starting points is improving, especially in reading and writing.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137879
<b>Local authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10001953

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	145
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Madeleine Russell
<b>Headteacher</b>	James Birkett
<b>Telephone number</b>	01767 650360
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.gamlingaymiddle.cambs.sch.uk">www.gamlingaymiddle.cambs.sch.uk</a>
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	12–13 November 2013

## Information about this school

- Gamlingay Village College is smaller than the average middle school.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority, is below the national average.
- Gamlingay Village College is a sponsor-led academy run by the Stratton Education Trust and shares a governing body with Stratton Upper School. The headteacher at Stratton Upper School acts as the executive headteacher of the school.
- The substantive headteacher took up his position in September 2015 at the same time as a new leader of mathematics. In January 2016, a new leader of English joined the team.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The school met the government's floor standards in 2015. These set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in every class, some jointly with senior leaders.
- The quality of the work in pupils' books was scrutinised across a range of subjects and year groups.
- Meetings were held with the school's senior leaders and subject leaders, as well as representatives from the board of trustees of the Stratton Education Trust.
- Pupils' views were sought between classes, during lessons and at breaktimes as well as in a group discussion with inspectors. The 14 responses to the online questionnaire for pupils were also considered.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of school documents, including the school development plan, information on current pupils' progress, behaviour records and the leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Inspectors took account of the 43 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 16 responses to the staff survey.

## Inspection team

Lesley Daniel, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Lynne Lowery

Ofsted Inspector



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