

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



20 July 2016

Mr Francis Galbraith
Principal
Goldington Academy
Haylands Way
Bedford
Bedfordshire
MK41 9BX

Dear Mr Galbraith

Short inspection of Goldington Academy

Following my visit to the school on 21 June 2016 with Helen Loughran, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Goldington Academy is a very welcoming school where pupils achieve well. Pupils, from the youngest to the eldest, and from varying backgrounds, work together with respect for one another and the staff. Pupils feel a sense of belonging at Goldington Academy and, consequently, they are well placed to learn and achieve.

Since your appointment as principal in 2012, you have provided diligent and determined leadership. You have not shied away from making difficult decisions to secure a good quality of education for the pupils in your care, especially where there has been weaker teaching or complacent leadership. There have been a large number of staffing changes since the previous inspection and many of these changes have been in middle leadership; that is, those responsible for leading subject areas. Staffing is now more stable and you have secured high-quality middle leaders. During this time of significant change, the additions and changes you have made to your senior leadership team have ensured that there is capacity to continue to raise standards at Goldington. In recruiting new staff, you are carefully bearing in mind the many different considerations for the school's future.

The school is undergoing a period of significant change. Leaders have secured permission to change the age range of the pupils on roll from September 2017, so that Goldington becomes a secondary school. Amid this, the school has also made a

successful application to the Department for Education to become a multi-academy trust sponsor. You are currently consulting, in collaboration with The Hills Academy, to form a multi-academy trust.

Pupils achieve well at Goldington Academy. Since the previous inspection overall standards of attainment have risen in line with national expectations. Moreover, gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and their classmates are closing rapidly. Although published results suggest that the progress that pupils make in key stage 2 is not good, this information does not take into account pupils' starting points when they join the school in Year 5. Externally moderated tests of pupils when they join the school, and school information for each year group, show that by the time pupils reach Year 8 they have made good progress. To assure yourselves of the accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' progress, you have validated your internal assessment in preparation for new assessment requirements in 2016. Current school assessment information, and evidence seen on inspection, demonstrates that overall school performance continues to improve.

In 2015, some of the lower-ability pupils did not achieve well enough by the end of Year 6, most notably in reading, and grammar, punctuation and spelling (GPS). Increased reading and GPS time in the curriculum, targeted one-to-one support and the effective use of reading assessment packages are making sure that these pupils are now making better progress. Additionally, a whole-school focus on grammar, punctuation and spelling is making a notable difference to the improvements that pupils are making in their work. You have also identified that the achievement of the most able disadvantaged pupils is a high priority for you. In 2015 the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who reached the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 was similar to their peers. However, not enough of the most able disadvantaged pupils achieved the highest levels. You have appointed a new senior leader with responsibility for these pupils and have implemented a number of additional strategies to support them. You rightly acknowledge that a small amount of teaching does not enthuse and engage the most and least able pupils, limiting the progress that some pupils make. The vice-principal for teaching and learning is taking effective action to improve this area of the school's work.

Leaders have made improvements to assessment and the curriculum diligently and thoughtfully. The assistant headteacher, who leads assessment, has established a system that is thoroughly understood and embraced by staff. Leaders use this information system to assess the effectiveness of their work. Where pupils are underperforming or struggling, leaders use the information well to intervene rapidly. For example, this system is used productively by the new associate assistant headteacher who reviews the effectiveness of extra tuition and one-to-one support. Consequently, the collective use of this system means that staff are working together cooperatively to ensure that they meet the needs of pupils in the most efficient way.

Pupils and parents appreciate the quality of the education and opportunities that they receive at Goldington. Pupils talk very enthusiastically about their 'fun' lessons where they learn well and the array of extra-curricular opportunities which include

football, gym, arts and craft, tennis, debating, cheerleading, the school choir, residential trips, day visits and music lessons. Pupils particularly appreciate the access they are given to the high-quality facilities shared with Bedford University. Most parents are very pleased with the education that their children are receiving and comment on the 'excellent principal' and high-quality senior leadership team. Parents also appreciate the communication that they receive, most notably over the potential future changes for the school and what it means for their children.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong ethos and culture of safeguarding in the school. The school's procedures for safeguarding pupils, including the record of checks of the suitability of staff, meet statutory requirements. The assistant headteacher, who is the designated safeguarding lead, is tenacious in ensuring that safeguarding is at the forefront of the work that staff undertake. Staff and governors are well trained. Referrals to external agencies, where there are concerns about pupils, are timely. The leader uses these external agencies effectively to get the right help for pupils.

Pupils feel safe and say that on the rare occasions when they are concerned, staff take their concerns seriously and act quickly and appropriately. Pupils are taught how to stay safe through a well-thought-out curriculum which enables them to understand the risks both online and in their day-to-day life. Assemblies, personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lessons, external visitors and staff all teach pupils how to be safe. Pupils say that bullying does not happen often but, when it does, it is dealt with well. They say that the appointment of anti-bullying ambassadors helps to make it easier to talk about their worries and concerns with trained peers.

Your business manager has been adept in successfully bidding for a large amount of additional funding which has allowed you to undertake a number of essential improvements to the school facilities. These have been paramount in ensuring a safe, suitable and high-quality learning environment for your pupils.

Inspection findings

- You, the senior team and the governing body have focused staff well on continuing to raise standards at Goldington Academy. Leaders' and governors' evaluation of the school is accurate and thorough. They use it methodically to check that the school is constantly improving against the priorities identified. As a result, leaders continually refine their work to ensure that pupils receive a good and improving quality of education. For example, leaders have identified that further work is needed to ensure that the work in pupils' books is used more sharply by middle leaders, when they are evaluating the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in their own areas.
- You have actively sought external validation of your own self-evaluation, most notably through the school's work with the Pilgrim Learning Trust and with a school improvement consultant. Leaders have welcomed this partnership with a cluster of other local schools and the school improvement

adviser and value their input as 'critical friends'.

- There have been many changes to the staffing since the previous inspection. These changes include eight new middle leaders and 18 new teachers, as well as the creation of additional positions in the senior team. These changes have been managed effectively. In particular, the work of the vice-principal in establishing rigorous monitoring processes for teaching and learning is ensuring that teaching continues to improve, despite some staffing turbulence.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard and above in reading, writing and mathematics at key stage 2 is similar to the national average. These results have improved since the previous inspection. School information, and the work scrutinised during the inspection, indicates that pupils make good progress during key stage 3, particularly in English and science. This is due to the effective teaching that they receive.
- The achievement of lower-ability pupils, most notably in reading and writing, and grammar, punctuation and spelling, was rightly identified as an area of weakness following the 2015 national tests. Leaders have addressed these issues with current Year 6 pupils through effective teaching, more focus on the development of pupils' English skills, additional curriculum time devoted to reading and grammar, punctuation and spelling, and more targeted intervention to meet pupils' needs. Those pupils in Year 7 who did not attain the required standards in reading, writing and mathematics are being well supported and are now catching up.
- The special educational needs coordinator has acted upon the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. More specific pupil profiles are now in place for pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities. You have found that this enables teachers to focus more effectively on meeting individual pupils' specific needs. The special educational needs coordinator monitors pupils' work and checks that assessment is accurate. She uses this information to communicate with teachers so that they are clear about how to meet the needs of pupils in lessons. Learning support assistants have been given additional contractual time to liaise with classroom teachers. This means that teaching is increasingly meeting the specific needs of pupils. Additional support is accurately matched to pupils' needs and is reviewed against well-measured starting points to assess the effect that it has had.
- Governors, led by a conscientious chair of the governing body, are determined that the school will provide the best education for each pupil. They bring a range of expertise to the role and use these skills to challenge and support the senior team over many aspects of the school's work. Governors supplement what they know about the school through regular visits. They work alongside the principal in all strategic decisions and are central to the choices being made about the future of the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching enthuses and engages the most and least able pupils to make rapid progress
- middle leaders make better use of their scrutiny of pupils' work when they make judgements about the overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment in their respective areas.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bedford Borough Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kim Pigram
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspection was carried out on one day by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Ofsted Inspector. The inspectors visited lessons, often accompanied by members of the senior leadership team. Meetings were held with school leaders, representatives of the governing body, middle leaders, and groups of pupils. Inspectors spoke to pupils informally around the school and observed them in lessons and at breaktime. Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including samples of pupils' work, information about safeguarding, pupils' assessment information and the school's self-evaluation and action planning. Inspectors also took account of 63 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents), and 39 responses to the staff survey.