

# Brooklands Middle School

Brooklands Drive, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire LU7 3PF

## Inspection dates

2–3 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	<b>Good</b>

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is variable. This is especially the case in science and some English classes. Despite the concerted efforts of school leaders, significant challenges in recruiting appropriately skilled teachers to key subjects remain.
- Pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, do not make consistently good progress from their individual starting points. This is especially the case at key stage 2.
- Teachers do not consistently provide suitable opportunities for pupils to improve their writing skills. As a consequence, pupils' writing is not as well developed as it should be.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do not consistently make the progress of which they are capable. Some teachers do not provide appropriately challenging learning activities for these pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils make variable progress from their individual, often low, starting points. Differences in outcomes with other pupils nationally have not diminished quickly enough.
- Leaders have not ensured that information available for parents through the school website is kept up to date.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher provides clear leadership and direction for the school. She is very well supported by her senior team, who share her vision of 'high expectation and high achievement'. Together they are securing the necessary improvements across the school.
- Leaders have made sure that pupils are very well cared for. Pupils, including those who are vulnerable, are given sensitive and skilful support. As a result, they are developing into resilient and enthusiastic learners.
- Leaders' actions to keep pupils safe at school are effective. Pupils say they feel safe and are increasingly confident in their work and play.
- Subject directors are increasingly effective in their work. They track pupils' progress carefully and are using this information to improve provision in their subject areas.
- Almost all pupils behave well. They are polite, courteous and supportive of each other and of adults in school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is provided for well. The very large majority of pupils are considerate and reflective.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - making sure that the information available to parents is up to date and accurately reflects the work taking place in the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - improving the quality of teaching, in particular in science and a small number of English classes
  - equipping teachers with the strategies to enable them to plan and implement learning that challenges pupils, including the most able, those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
  - making sure that the work being done to improve pupils' writing is consistently and effectively applied by teachers in all subjects.
- Improve the quality of outcomes by:
  - ensuring that pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, make more rapid progress across Years 5 and 6.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The well-respected headteacher has established a culture of high expectation combined with high-quality care for pupils' personal development and well-being. One pupil told inspectors that the headteacher has, 'created a happy learning environment'. This sentiment was echoed by other pupils, parents and teachers during the course of the inspection. Well supported by her senior team, the headteacher is bringing about the necessary improvements to many areas of this improving school.
- Leaders have a precise knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school as they regularly review the effectiveness of each aspect of its work. This self-evaluation informs the school improvement plan, which is an accurate reflection of what needs to improve.
- The headteacher is unequivocal in her view that she will only appoint teachers who have the skills to enable pupils to make rapid progress. Despite her best efforts, she has been unsuccessful in recruiting well to some key posts.
- The headteacher makes good use of the school's performance management processes, and has high expectations for teachers' performance that are clearly understood. She rightly takes swift action where practice is not effective enough. Teachers who need support are coached and mentored well by school leaders. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, for example in English, mathematics and design, has improved, although it is not consistently good.
- Subject directors make good use of the school's accurate assessment information to guide their work. These leaders know what needs to improve and set about their roles with skilful enthusiasm. For example, pupils' reading is improving as a result of the appropriate changes made to the English curriculum. Similarly, due to the well-judged support for Year 7 pupils who need to catch up, for example in mathematics, these pupils are making more rapid progress.
- School leaders have designed a broad and balanced curriculum that provides opportunities for most pupils to make strong progress. Leaders adapt the curriculum to match to the interests and needs of each cohort. For example, leaders provide Year 8 pupils with options that enable them to follow courses that are aligned to their ambitions. The curriculum is rich with opportunities for pupils to develop their creative skills. One pupil commented that this is a school 'in tune with the arts'. Inspection evidence supports this view. High numbers of pupils attend clubs such as knitting, music, choir and art.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is provided for well. Assemblies and tutor periods cover themes such as tolerance and well-being, while pupils learn about different faiths and cultures in subjects such as art and geography. Pupils develop a good knowledge of life in modern Britain and also understand why it is important to value and celebrate differences in culture and lifestyle.
- The school makes good use of the physical education (PE) and sports premium funding. The provision of a variety of activities such as fencing and boccia (a sport similar to bowls) has increased pupils' confidence in a range of sports. A large number

of pupils now take part in competitive and non-competitive sporting events. Sport is held in high regard by pupils, the provision being described by one, typically, as, 'pretty cool here'.

- The school is making progressively better use of the funding to support disadvantaged pupils. The deputy headteacher has accurately identified these pupils' barriers to learning and has rightly made improving their achievement and attendance high priorities for the school. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance has improved as a result of the precise and effective support that has been put in place. Through schemes such as the 'Brooklands ambassadors club', disadvantaged pupils' literacy and overall progress is improving. Year 7 catch-up funding is also used effectively to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils in receipt of this support make accelerated progress.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is increasingly well led. The special educational needs leadership tracks these pupils' progress with care and puts in place appropriate support. The progress these pupils make is improving, but is not consistently good. Pupils who have education, health and care plans are exceptionally well cared for and make good progress from their individual starting points.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors share the headteacher's high aspirations for the school. They are well led by an experienced chair of governors and well informed about the progress that pupils make in English, mathematics and science. Governors have not fully developed a detailed knowledge of the progress pupils make across other subjects, but there are plans in place to resolve this.
- Governors visit the school on a regular basis and provide useful information and areas for improvement after each visit to the school.
- The governing body ensures that the school's performance management policy is accurately implemented. As a result, leaders take account of teachers' performance when deciding whether teachers should progress up the pay scale.
- While governors have now ensured that statutory policies reflect requirements, they have not ensured that the information available for parents via the school website is up to date.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders undertake appropriate checks when recruiting new staff and keep records in good order. The governing body carries out regular checks on the safeguarding procedures held by the school.
- Leaders have ensured that staff are appropriately trained in each relevant aspect of child protection and safeguarding, including the government's 'Prevent' duty. As a result, adults know what to do if they are concerned about a pupil's well-being and how to raise any concerns they may have.
- Pupils informed the inspection team that they feel safe in school. They know how to keep safe online and can explain why this is important. The overwhelming majority of parents agree that their children are safe in school. Inspection evidence confirms these

views. As a result pupils, some of whom arrive at school with low self-esteem, are increasingly confident in their work and play.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is variable, most notably in science and a small number of English classes. As a consequence, pupils are not consistently making the rapid progress necessary to enable them to catch up from their low starting points with their peers nationally.
- Some teachers do not use the school's accurate assessment information with sufficient precision to plan learning activities that are appropriately challenging, especially for the most able pupils. This results in inconsistent progress over time. This was seen clearly in key stage 2 science. In one class, pupils were clearly deepening their knowledge and practical understanding of the fire triangle, in another, several pupils lost interest in their work as they attempted tasks that were not well matched to their learning needs.
- Teachers do not consistently provide opportunities for pupils, including the most able, to develop their writing skills well. For example, evidence seen in geography and science books indicates that pupils have too few chances to explain their knowledge and understanding of the themes that they are studying. Where teachers are skilled at developing pupils' writing skills, pupils demonstrate the high standards of which they are capable. This was seen in a high-ability key stage 3 English class, where pupils were supported and challenged to write with creative fluency.
- Not all teachers consistently use the school's policy on providing feedback on pupils' work. Where teachers use this well and provide time for pupils to respond, pupils are confident in improving their work. For example, the precise, subject specific feedback in art enables pupils to make rapid improvements. However, inspectors saw examples where important spelling errors were not corrected, or where pupils were not provided with the time or support to improve their work sufficiently.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving. This is seen particularly in the teaching of reading. Inspectors heard pupils read in one-to-one situations and also reading to whole-class groups. Inspection evidence demonstrates that pupils enjoy the challenge of reading and read with confidence.
- Excellent teaching practice exists in several areas across the school. The number of subjects in which this strong practice is evident is growing. Where this is the case, pupils respond very well. For example, teachers in art, computing, history, music, physical education and some English and mathematics classes plan learning that enthuses and challenges pupils. In these classes pupils make good and sometimes better progress over time. For example, skilful planning in key stage 2 mathematics enabled pupils to enthusiastically develop their understanding of decimals.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders work successfully to ensure that pupils are very well cared for. Pupils explained

that if they have concerns or become anxious, adults listen carefully and support them well. Parents who spoke with inspectors were full of praise for the 'nurturing environment' that school leaders have created. Pupils' confidence and self-esteem increase the longer that they attend Brooklands Middle School.

- School leaders have successfully generated an ethos of togetherness and belonging. For example, pupils who arrive mid-way through the school year told inspectors how their tutors take time to introduce them to each member of their form group. Parents also explained how their children have settled in quickly and well because of the effective work of the teachers.
- Pupils are proud of their school houses, value their house points and welcome the competition that their houses bring. Pupils make the most of the chances to develop their decision-making skills through roles such as sports leaders, eco-warriors or house leaders. These roles help to prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education.
- Leaders ensure that pupils develop their understanding of leading a safe and healthy life. Activities such as futsal (a form of five-a-side football), badminton and table tennis help pupils to develop a love of fitness and sport. Pupils are proud to be members of the 'junior police squad' which meets on a weekly basis. This group equips pupils with the strategies to act safely in a variety of settings.
- Pupils know what bullying is and are clear that 'it is not tolerated here'. They explained that incidents are dealt with firmly and effectively. Parents commented that where they have concerns, they are dealt with 'fairly and quickly' and that the 'communication from the school was spot on'. School records indicate that bullying is a rare event.
- Leaders have recently developed a more detailed programme of careers advice, information and guidance. Pupils are able to develop their knowledge of personal finance, the world of work and specific careers advice, such as the uniformed services. It is too soon to assess the impact of this work.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Very many pupils behave well in lessons. Relationships between pupils and with adults are characterised by polite, good-humoured discussions and a strong culture of mutual support. This, in many cases, creates an atmosphere in which pupils develop the confidence to strive to learn well.
- Pupils move swiftly and happily between lessons. They are punctual to class and ready to learn when they arrive at each lesson. Pupils of all ages socialise well and play cheerfully at lunchtimes and breaktimes.
- Pupils explained that they enjoy school and learning. Attendance, including that of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, continues to improve and is in line with the national average. Leaders carefully monitor each pupil's attendance and work well with families to ensure that pupils attend regularly.
- Leaders work effectively to improve the behaviour of the small number of pupils who find it difficult to make the right behaviour choices. As a result, exclusions have fallen sharply since the last inspection.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- School leaders take great care to establish what pupils know and can achieve when they enter the school. This externally validated, assessment information indicates that pupils enter the school with significantly lower starting points than their peers nationally. Pupils' progress from their different starting points is not yet consistently good. This is due to the variability in quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- In 2016, pupils did not make the progress necessary for them to catch up by the end of key stage 2. This was especially the case in mathematics and writing, where pupils' progress was variable. Leaders are aware why this is the case and have put in place effective support for these pupils. Inspection evidence indicates that the progress that pupils make in mathematics is improving. However, leaders acknowledge that more needs to be done to ensure that pupils write consistently well across the curriculum.
- Historically, pupils at Brooklands Middle School have made better progress across Years 7 and 8. In 2016, pupils did not make consistently good progress by the end of Year 8. For example, while outcomes were stronger in history, art, English and mathematics, they were less so in science and modern foreign languages. School leaders are taking decisive action to improve these outcomes. Inspection evidence indicates that, in key stage 3, pupils are making better progress across many subjects. School leaders have, however, rightly identified that outcomes are not good enough in science and a small number of English classes.
- In 2016, disadvantaged pupils, including those who are most able, did not achieve as well as their peers nationally at key stage 2, and in English and mathematics in key stage 3. A scrutiny of school assessment information and work in pupils' books indicates that, in particular, in Years 6, 7 and 8 these pupils are making improved, but not consistently good, progress. They achieve well in subjects where teachers have high expectations and provide them with activities that interest and challenge them, for example in physical education, mathematics, English, history, music and art.
- The most able pupils are not consistently provided with the opportunities to excel. As a consequence, they do not make the progress of which they are capable. Where the most able pupils are given well-crafted opportunities to deepen their knowledge they achieve well, for example in key stage 2 mathematics.
- While pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making improved progress from their individual starting points due to the better support that they receive, it is not yet consistently good. This is because not all teachers plan learning that precisely matches their needs or capabilities.

## School details

Unique reference number	137636
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10008655

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 converter
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	462
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Myra Gray
Headteacher	Julie Hodgson
Telephone number	01525 372018
Website	<a href="http://www.brooklandsschool.co.uk">www.brooklandsschool.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:brooklands@cbc.beds.sch.uk">brooklands@cbc.beds.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	12–13 June 2013

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- This school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school has recently experienced difficulties in recruiting staff to key posts, including teachers of English.
- Most pupils are of White British Heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils to whom the pupil premium applies is slightly above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is



above the national average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan or statement of educational needs is above the national average.

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have been in post since September 2015.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 27 lessons. Several of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, teachers, support staff, governors and two groups of pupils. An inspector also spoke with the following people in separate telephone discussions: a representative of the local authority; a school governor; and the headteacher of the local upper school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation which included information about pupils' attendance, achievement and behaviour; school self-evaluation and improvement planning; safeguarding; the curriculum; governor meetings and the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Inspectors considered the view of 51 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as of those who contacted the inspection team over the course of the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the views of 18 pupils and 13 staff who responded to the online surveys.

## Inspection team

John Lucas, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sue Pryor	Ofsted Inspector
Phillip Barr	Ofsted Inspector
Brenda Watson	Ofsted Inspector

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