

Fulbrook Middle School

Weathercock Lane, Woburn Sands, Milton Keynes, Bedfordshire MK17 8NP

Inspection dates

6–7 December 2016

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	Requires Improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senior leaders and governors have effectively addressed the issues raised at the previous inspection with conviction and determination. As a result, teaching has improved and is mostly securely good.
- Governors provide effective challenge and support for school leaders. They are ambitious for the school and committed to its further improvement.
- Staff morale is high and teachers feel motivated by the energy and clear vision of the new leadership team.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard by the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics is higher than in other schools nationally. However, not enough pupils reach the higher standard in mathematics and writing.
- Pupils benefit from teaching that mostly engages and stimulates them across subjects and year groups. In a few lessons, the pace and level of challenge does not fully meet the needs of the pupils.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are good. As a result, pupils enjoy school and work hard to succeed.
- The school has strong relationships with parents who feel their children are happy and well cared for at school. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive.
- The considerate behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school creates a calm and orderly environment where pupils can work and socialise together harmoniously.
- Pupils demonstrate a well-developed understanding of and belief in the importance of the 'Fulbrook values' that underpin the school curriculum and ethos.
- Leaders use accurate information on how well pupils are doing to identify who needs extra support, which is then provided swiftly and effectively. However, not all pupils understand the new system that is used to measure their attainment.
- Disadvantaged pupils start in Year 5 with levels of attainment below that of their non-disadvantaged peers. This difference, although still evident at the end of key stage 2, has almost completely diminished by the end of Year 8.
- Year 8 pupils are well prepared for their move to upper school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the effective support they receive.
- Arrangements for keeping children safe are well managed and effective. Pupils told inspectors that they felt safe in school and well cared for by the adults who work there.
- The developing confidence of new senior and middle leaders is nurtured well by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. However, some do not evaluate what they do effectively and so the impact of their work is weakened.

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 to evaluate the impact of their work more sharply so that what works best is quickly identified and further developed.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that more pupils make good and better progress by making sure that:
 - all teachers use time productively in lessons to challenge and enthuse pupils, especially the most able
 - teachers in all subjects maximise opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills
 - all pupils understand how their progress and attainment is measured so they are motivated to achieve their targets

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The new headteacher's clear vision and strong leadership has united the staff in a common goal to improve the progress of all groups of pupils at the school. Staff feel valued and supported by senior leaders and appreciate the time they now have to plan activities together and share good practice. Teachers are, therefore, motivated and keen to improve; consequently, teaching is improving strongly. Teachers benefit from many opportunities to develop their skills through training that is tailored closely to their needs.
- More capacity in the leadership team means that there is now a sharper focus on areas such as strengthening the quality of teaching. This is closely monitored and support is given to teachers whose practice needs to improve. A more rigorous approach to the evaluation of teachers' effectiveness now takes into account how much progress pupils make in their lessons as well as the quality of teaching and assessment.
- Governors, together with the headteacher, have evaluated the school's strengths and weaknesses accurately. They know what needs to be done to ensure that pupils in all year groups make improved progress to further raise standards. For example, too few pupils reached the higher standard in writing in the end of key stage 2 tests in 2016 and so opportunities for developing writing across the curriculum are being increased.
- A recently expanded senior team has risen to the challenge to innovate and improve their areas of responsibility and flourished under the guidance and support of the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Action plans show ambition but, at times, are not evaluated in enough detail to improve future practice quickly and effectively.
- Senior leaders regularly consult external and nationally recognised organisations to support their work to improve the school. They work closely with other middle schools in the area to check that they are assessing attainment accurately. They have also established fruitful relationships with the lower schools their pupils come from and with the upper schools they go on to.
- The curriculum is varied and well designed to meet the needs of all pupils. For example, at key stage 3, pupils study French and science to a standard that prepares them well for their move to upper school at the end of Year 8. Pupils are enthusiastic about all of their subjects and enjoyed sharing details with inspectors of what they had been studying.
- Many extra activities are open to pupils, both before and after school as well as at lunchtimes. Many of these involve sport, but there is also a breakfast club and a homework club. Additionally there is the opportunity to learn sign language or practise skateboarding and scooter skills on the playground after school. This means that pupils are offered a rich curriculum that helps them to develop interests beyond the classroom.
- The curriculum strongly promotes the personal development and welfare of pupils. The school has developed its curriculum around 12 values, for example acceptance, honesty and caring, that permeate every aspect of school life. When asked about

British values, pupils explained to inspectors that they are 'things that should be treasured' and 'things we should live by'. The school council, who are all elected representatives, lead work to raise money for charity and are increasingly consulted by senior leaders on how the school could improve. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is promoted effectively, preparing them well for life in modern Britain.

- Parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, were overwhelmingly supportive of the school and are confident that their children are safe, are well taught and are making progress. The headteacher has increased opportunities for parents to engage with their children's learning and talk to teachers about their progress. During the inspection, there was a well-attended 'Book Look' event when pupils showed their parents their work and parents could talk informally with class teachers.
- Senior leaders have introduced weekly progress meetings where teams meet to discuss how well all pupils are doing. This intense scrutiny means that the progress of all groups of pupils is considered and has helped leaders to identify where there is a need to provide extra challenge for the most able as well as support for those who need to catch up.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported at the school. An effective team assesses the needs of each pupil and strategies are put in place to ensure their good progress. There were many comments from parents who responded to the online survey Parent View that recognised the positive impact this work has had on the well-being and achievement of their children.
- Pupil premium funding is used very effectively to provide intensive short-term support from teachers that is improving the progress of disadvantaged pupils. There is a homework club targeted specifically at disadvantaged pupils, who are also provided with free transport home on the school minibus if required. Communication with parents has also been improved through the use of texts to remind them of important events or to make them immediately aware of any concerns.
- Catch-up funding, provided to help schools support pupils who did not reach the expected standard in the key stage 2 national tests, has been used particularly successfully. All pupils involved in this programme last year made more than expected progress in both mathematics and in reading, meaning that nearly all have caught up with other pupils in the school who had similar starting points.
- The school uses the sports premium for primary schools appropriately to increase the opportunities for pupils to participate in a wider range of sporting activities. However, senior leaders do not evaluate the impact of each of these initiatives sharply enough to ensure effective future planning.

Governance of the school

- Governance of the school has strengthened considerably since the previous inspection. Governors are well trained, confident in their roles and determined to continue to improve the quality of education that will lead to even better outcomes for pupils.
- Governors understand the school well and have accurately evaluated its strengths and where it still needs to make improvements. This is because they visit more often and

meet with a wider range of staff and pupils, which gives them a fuller picture of the school. They carry out a range of monitoring visits, including looking at the quality of pupils' work. Governors meet regularly with school leaders in order to monitor specific aspects of the school's work. All staff with an area of responsibility report in detail to the full governing body.

- Governors are able to provide effective challenge to school leaders because they understand how to use information on how well pupils are doing to measure themselves against other schools. They check how well all groups of pupils are doing and measure the impact of spending, including the pupil premium and catch-up funding, on pupils' outcomes. They hold teachers to account for how well pupils do in their lessons and use pay increments to reward effective performance.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and governors with responsibility for safeguarding ensure that all staff are up to date with the latest information and responsibility. This includes training in the government's 'Prevent' duty to counter radicalisation, and in child protection. Safer recruiting guidelines are stringently followed. Leaders have created a safeguarding culture where pupils look out for each other and are confident about reporting concerns to staff. Effective relationships with parents and outside agencies ensure that pupils are kept safe and their welfare needs are well met.
- The school's curriculum teaches pupils how to manage some of the risks they face in modern society such as keeping safe in the street and keeping safe online. Important issues such as dangers from drugs and coping with peer pressure are revisited as pupils move up the school so that the content of lessons meets their changing needs.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is good and continues to improve. In most lessons, teachers provide well-planned activities for pupils that engage and stimulate them.
- Teaching assistants provide constructive support to a range of pupils. They work well with teachers in class questioning and prompting targeted pupils to help them to develop their understanding. Teaching assistants also work with small groups or individuals to provide specific literacy or numeracy support to help pupils in danger of falling behind their peers.
- Teachers apply the school's marking and feedback policy consistently. Pupils told inspectors that they find teachers' comments on how to improve their work helpful. Feedback, especially in English, is also used to provide extra challenge to the most-able pupils.
- Reading has a high profile in the school, with pupils telling inspectors that they read all the time. A number of pupils read to inspectors with confidence and were keen to read aloud in class when given the opportunity by their teachers. Pupils visit the library regularly in English lessons to change their reading books and have time to read at length in a quiet environment. They also discuss what they are reading with their teachers and develop their writing skills by producing book reviews for other pupils.

- Most teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve in lessons but on occasions, for example in some art and technology lessons, pupils are given too much time to complete work and so the pace of their learning slows.
- Teachers are mostly very secure in their subject knowledge, even when not teaching their own subject. For example, in a Year 5 French lesson taught by a non-specialist, pupils' authentic pronunciation echoed that of their teacher, who also expected a high level of grammatical accuracy from the pupils. The few teachers who do not demonstrate confidence when they teach outside their own subject are well supported by leaders to improve their practice.
- A new assessment system, which measures how well pupils are doing in relation to their age, was introduced last year to replace national curriculum levels. Most older pupils could explain to inspectors in which category they were working and what their targets were. However, many younger pupils were confused about how well they were doing in lessons. This means that they are unclear about how much progress they need to make to achieve their targets.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

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 like their teachers and feel that their teachers know them well. Parents who responded to Parent View agree.
- Pupils feel safe in school and are taught to manage the risks they face outside of school. For example, they know how to keep themselves safe online. They appreciate opportunities in school to learn and talk about topics such as cyber bullying, smoking and drugs, as well as the impact of terrorism. Older pupils remember clearly the strong messages from a recent theatre in education production on child sexual exploitation.
- Pupils have many opportunities to develop leadership skills beyond being members of the active school council. For example, they can apply to become trained anti-bullying ambassadors who mentor younger, vulnerable pupils. Prefects support staff with monitoring behaviour at breaks and lunchtimes and sports leaders run clubs for their peers before school and at lunchtimes. Pupils take these responsibilities very seriously.
- When pupils are given the opportunity to use these leadership skills in lessons they excel. For example, in a Year 8 physical education lesson sports leaders were supportive and patient as they coached their peers to improve their basketball skills.

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, showing consideration for others. Pupils are proud of their school, look smart in their uniforms and take good care of their environment. For example, there is no litter around the school building or grounds.
- In class, pupils are able to work successfully on their own as well as with others. They

want to do well and show this by arriving at lessons ready to work, meeting teachers' high expectations of behaviour and presenting their work neatly in their books.

- Pupils understand different types of bullying and told inspectors that it rarely happens in school but that when it does they know that it will be dealt with promptly because teachers 'just won't put up with it'.
- Attendance for all groups is tracked carefully and is above the national average. Persistent absence is low because the school identifies patterns quickly and takes action to support families. Pupils enjoy coming to school and do not want to miss their lessons or time with their friends.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Leaders now carefully establish what pupils know and can do when they join the school in Year 5. This accurate and externally validated information demonstrates that pupils now in Year 6 made rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics last year. Information from teachers on how well pupils achieve, observations in lessons and a detailed scrutiny of pupils' work by inspectors shows that the progress of these pupils in reading, writing and mathematics continues to accelerate this year.
- Inspection evidence, including externally moderated assessment information, demonstrates that pupils continue to make rapid progress in Years 7 and 8. By the time they leave the school, many pupils have made good progress across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Pupils arrive at their upper schools well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- In 2016, a higher proportion of pupils reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2 than in other schools nationally. More pupils also achieved a higher standard in reading than in other schools nationally. However, this did not represent good progress for all groups of pupils from their key stage 1 starting points in mathematics and writing.
- Results in the 2016 key stage 2 writing assessments for the most able were disappointing. Not enough pupils reached the higher level in their writing because there were not enough opportunities for them to write at greater depth across subjects. In all year groups, the progress of the most-able pupils is improving. This is because teachers provide activities that enable these pupils to develop the skills they need to excel.
- Teachers are becoming more skilled at providing specific support for pupils who need to catch up in reading, writing or mathematics. This support is proving to be highly effective. All of the current year 8 pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who received this support after the 2015 key stage 2 tests have made better than expected progress. This means that most of these pupils are now working at the same level as other pupils with similar starting points. In all year groups, pupils who have special educational needs make good progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils in 2016 made similar progress from their starting points to other disadvantaged pupils nationally between key stage 1 and the end of key stage 2. Their

attainment in reading was also in line with other disadvantaged pupils nationally, although writing and mathematics were lower. However, by the time disadvantaged pupils reach Year 8, their achievement in reading, writing and mathematics is at least in line with age-related expectations. A detailed scrutiny of pupils' work during the inspection supports this.

- In Year 7, pupils who did not reach the expected standard in their national tests at the end of Year 6 have continued to make strong progress this academic year and many have already caught up with other pupils with similar starting points.
- Teachers provide regular information on how well pupils achieve in a range of subjects. This accountability has led to improvements in the progress pupils make in subjects such as science, French and geography. Disadvantaged pupils still do less well than their non-disadvantaged peers in the key stage 2 science assessments. However, rapidly improving provision ensures that they are working at the same level as other pupils by the end of year 8 and so move on to upper school ready for the challenges of GCSE.

School details

Unique reference number	137904
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10019622

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

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	408
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Amanda Knibb
Headteacher	Samantha Clancy
Telephone number	01908 582022
Website	www.fulbrookmiddleschool.org.uk
Email address	office@fulbrookmiddleschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 September 2014

Information about this school

- The academy is smaller than the average sized secondary school. Although it is a middle school, it is deemed to be a secondary school.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average and only a small number of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- A new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been in post since September 2015.

- 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.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils learning in every class across a range of subjects. Many of these were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' books, listened to them read, and talked with different groups of pupils about their lessons and school life. The 77 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire for pupils were also considered.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, other senior and middle leaders and members of the governing body.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documentation relating to pupils' progress and the management of the school, including the arrangements to ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- Inspectors took account of the 98 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire for parents, Parent View, as well as the views of those parents who spoke directly with inspectors. The views of staff were also considered, through the 40 responses to an Ofsted questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lesley Daniel, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Brown	Ofsted Inspector
Paul O'Shea	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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