

The Ferrars Academy

Macaulay Road, Luton, Bedfordshire LU4 0LL

Inspection dates

17–18 May 2017

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
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The interim principal is providing strong leadership. Her commitment and vision have been fundamental to the rapid improvement of the school over the last two terms. She is ably supported by other school leaders. Together, they ensure that pupils flourish both socially and academically.
- There is an extremely happy atmosphere in school. Leaders value all members of the school community and enable them all to contribute to continued improvement.
- Teaching and outcomes for pupils are now good. All groups, including disadvantaged pupils and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress over time.
- Early years provision is good. Children are taught well in the Nursery and Reception classes and make good progress. Teachers plan engaging work that inspires children to do well. However, they do not always make enough use of outdoor areas to support learning.
- Across the school, the teaching of reading and writing is particularly strong and helps pupils to acquire new skills quickly.
- Pupils also make good progress in mathematics most of the time. Occasionally, teachers do not respond quickly enough when pupils are finding mathematics work too hard or too easy, slowing progress.
- Pupils greatly enjoy school because learning is enriched by many memorable activities both in and out of lessons. These contribute extremely successfully to pupils' outstanding personal development.
- Pupils feel extremely safe and leave school as well-adjusted, happy and very confident individuals.
- Pupils behave well. They are keen to take responsibility and are tolerant and respectful. They have extremely positive attitudes towards learning.
- Leaders check individual pupils' progress carefully and respond quickly to any possible dips in progress. However, they do not use this information well enough to compare the progress of different groups or to measure the impact of interventions, such as those for disadvantaged pupils.
- Governors offer senior leaders good levels of support and are becoming increasingly confident about holding them to account.
- The school has a very strong partnership with parents. They are extremely supportive of the school. They greatly appreciate the school's good efforts to involve them in their children's learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers respond more quickly to move learning on when work in mathematics is too hard or too easy for pupils.
- Make better use of information on pupils' progress to check that all groups are doing equally well and to evaluate the impact of initiatives or interventions, such as those funded by the pupil premium.
- Improve outdoor provision and learning in the early years, especially in the Reception classes, so that it is of the same high quality as indoors.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The interim principal's commitment, drive and vision have been fundamental in the rapid improvements made over the last two terms, building well on the start made since the previous inspection. She is supported well by an able leadership team who share her commitment to improve outcomes for pupils. Together, they have ensured that there is a culture of high expectations across the school.
- Leaders have successfully improved the quality of teaching, especially of writing. They ensure that training for teachers is matched to the needs of the school. For example, they recently provided training on science topics such as 'plants' because teachers said that they lacked confidence in these areas.
- Leaders set teachers challenging targets to improve. These are based on thorough monitoring that is accurate in identifying both strengths and weaknesses across the school. Leaders give good support to new teachers when they join the school, so that they understand quickly what is expected of them.
- Staff morale is high. Adults work together well. Middle leaders understand their role in securing improvement and focus well on the main priorities. They work closely with the interim principal to ensure that initiatives will help to improve outcomes for pupils.
- The school has a wealth of data on pupils' attainment and progress. Leaders know how well pupils are doing individually, but they do not yet use this information well enough to compare the progress of different groups or to check that all initiatives are having an equally strong impact. This means that, for example, leaders cannot say with confidence which aspects of pupil premium spending are proving most successful in securing the clearly improved outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- The curriculum is rich and exciting, and engages pupils well. This contributes to their enjoyment of learning. There are plentiful opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy skills in other areas of learning. Staff willingly go the extra mile to provide pupils with a range of exciting activities both in and out of lessons. For example, pupils produced high-quality writing in history after re-enacting 'The Great Fire of London' because they were highly motivated to share their experiences.
- The curriculum successfully promotes pupils' creativity through art and music. The primary sport premium funding is used effectively to enhance the school's good-quality provision in this area. Specialist coaches are used to develop staff's and pupils' skills. The funding has also been used to increase pupils' participation in competitive sports.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong. Pupils understand the need to become responsible citizens. They learn important values such as tolerance and respect through the school's 'value of the half-term'. They relish being provided with opportunities to take on responsibilities by, for example, being school councillors or 'learning leaders'. Pupils develop a good understanding of different cultures and religions, which helps prepare them well for life in modern Britain.
- Parents are almost unanimously positive about the work of the school and recent improvements. They especially like the caring and nurturing atmosphere in school, typically making comments such as, 'I know my children will be well cared for when I

drop them at the school gate’ and ‘I have every confidence that my child will be safe and happy at school.’

- Leaders successfully engage with parents. The school’s family worker team makes an important contribution to this by providing activities such as a weekly family breakfast club or opportunities for fathers to work and play with their children.

Governance of the school

- Governors are keen and supportive. They have helped the school to improve since the previous inspection. They make good use of external consultants to provide them with information on the school’s strengths and weaknesses. They have recently strengthened their monitoring procedures so that they can find out more for themselves. This is helping them provide more challenge to other school leaders.
- While governors have a generally good overview of the work of the school, their evaluation of the impact of the pupil premium is not based on an understanding of which initiatives have proved to be the most successful and is not, therefore, precise enough to help them fine-tune spending from year to year. Despite this, the overall impact of support for disadvantaged pupils through the pupil premium is good, and the rapid progress they make is helping them to catch up with other pupils nationally.
- Governors have a clear picture of where teaching is stronger or weaker and how it is being improved. They make sure that systems to manage staff performance are properly implemented.
- Governors ensure that funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used effectively to help them make good progress.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Parents are very pleased with the culture of safety in the school. Leaders ensure that staff, including those that join during the year, are well trained in safeguarding procedures. Staff know the pupils well and are vigilant in spotting potential problems. This enables them to spot any changes in behaviour that might suggest that pupils are vulnerable to risks such as radicalisation or neglect.
- The school works well with its key partners, including parents, to ensure that all pupils are kept safe and cared for. Pupils take part in a variety of workshops on subjects such as internet and road safety to help them understand what they can do to keep themselves safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the previous inspection and is now good across the school.
- Across Years 1 and 2, teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teachers have positive relationships with their class. They expect pupils to work hard and to know they can do so without fear of failure. They make good use of praise to

motivate pupils to do well. Teachers apply rewards systems consistently. They give good-quality feedback to pupils to help them improve.

- The teaching of English is especially strong. Teachers introduce new skills confidently because they have very good subject knowledge. Basic skills such as phonics, grammar and punctuation are taught well. Teachers take every opportunity to reinforce writing skills. They encourage pupils to improve their written work by, for example, asking them to think about sentence structure and the vocabulary they are using. Using this information, teachers adapt English work well to meet pupils' different needs and to provide the right level of challenge, including for the most able.
- In mathematics, work is engaging and well resourced. Teachers plan thoroughly, but there are occasions when work is too hard or too easy for some pupils. When this happens, teachers do not always respond quickly enough to move learning on.
- Teachers deploy additional adults effectively, not just to help those who struggle with their work, but also to give the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, an extra boost where needed.
- Teachers make learning fun and give pupils many opportunities to write in science, history and geography. In these subjects teachers often get the best from the pupils, but this is not always the case, resulting in there being occasional variations in the quality of recorded work.
- Most parents are pleased with the quality of teaching. Although some would like more homework, pupils feel it is 'about right'. Inspectors found that most homework is interesting and engaging and builds effectively on what pupils have learned in class.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes towards learning. They show a thirst for knowledge as they find out about new things in lessons. They are highly motivated and take great care to do their best at all times when working.
- Pupils are proud of their work. Their books are very well presented and they talk enthusiastically to visitors about what they have been learning. As one said, 'We love school because every day is different.'
- Pupils are kind and caring and look after each other well. They happily celebrate each other's successes in lessons, sometimes applauding spontaneously when one of their classmates has done something especially well.
- A particular strength of pupils' personal development is the way that they take responsibility, showing great maturity and confidence for their age. In roles such as school councillors, eco-warriors or digital leaders, pupils make an excellent contribution to school life. School councillors take their own minutes and are pleased that staff listen to their ideas.
- Pupils feel extremely safe at school. They have a very secure understanding of the dangers they may face in the local community. In school, they do their best to keep

each other safe. For example, when bike riding at playtime, they are very careful to avoid accidents.

- Activities such as a recent 'Internet Safety Day' help pupils understand the potential dangers of modern technology. The school has 'online ambassadors' who help to reinforce the importance of staying safe when using computers. Consequently, pupils know what to do if they encounter a problem when using the internet. They are very clear that they are too young to use social media.
- Pupils report that very occasional bullying is tackled well. School records confirm this. Pupils know who to turn to if they have a worry and are very confident that any problems will be resolved quickly. As one pupil commented, 'Everyone is there to help us.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Parent, pupils and staff agree that behaviour is typically good. School records confirm that incidents of poor behaviour are rare but are dealt with well when they occur. Pupils like the school's systems for managing behaviour and respond accordingly. They feel that staff apply rules fairly.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and courteous. They have good manners when eating at lunchtime. They play together happily on the playground. The school ensures that breaktimes are calm and harmonious by giving the pupils lots to do and by ensuring that there are good levels of supervision.
- Pupils are keen to learn and work hard most of the time. They show good self-discipline for their age both in and outside lessons. For example, they patiently wait their turn when taking part in discussions and they listen carefully to the contributions of other pupils.
- Attendance has improved over the last year and is now in line with the national average for all significant groups, including disadvantaged pupils. Leaders work well with parents who do not send their children to school regularly, making them aware of the importance of not missing school without good reason.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because, when pupils are given work that is not sufficiently challenging or is too hard, a few pupils become quietly inattentive and do not concentrate well enough.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils are prepared well academically for the next stage of their education. Pupils' progress has improved since the previous inspection, especially in writing. They now make good progress across the school, acquiring new skills quickly in a range of subjects. Consequently, pupils' attainment is rising and the proportion working at or beyond the expected levels in the current Year 2 is already higher than was reached in the school's 2016 end of year national assessments.
- The progress of pupils currently in the school is particularly strong in English. This is supported by the good teaching of phonics, with most pupils reaching the expected

standard for their age in national screening by the end of Year 2. Pupils read with pleasure and are able to talk confidently about favourite authors. When reading aloud in class, they use good expression and show a strong sense of audience.

- Pupils' writing has improved greatly since the previous inspection, and especially in the current year. Staff are relentless in their desire to develop confident and skilled writers who understand why writing is important. The focus on teaching pupils the rules of spelling, grammar and punctuation is proving extremely beneficial in improving the quality of writing.
- Pupils benefit from many opportunities to write in a variety of styles in different subjects and this has also helped to improve skills. Pupils' writing uses interesting vocabulary to engage readers. They develop a neat handwriting style which means that their work is nearly always well presented.
- While progress is generally good in mathematics, it is slightly slower than in reading and writing. This is because teachers do not always adapt work quickly enough when pupils have grasped a task or are finding it too difficult.
- The school successfully ensures that all groups, including the most able, make good progress most of the time. In mathematics, most-able pupils take part in 'Maths Master' sessions outside lessons which help to improve skills. However, just occasionally, progress slows when work in mathematics is not sufficiently challenging.
- Support for disadvantaged pupils is well targeted and helps them to make good progress in English and mathematics, often from much lower than average starting points.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Both in class and in small groups, teachers give them work that is matched to their needs. Extra adults also give them support when appropriate, and ensure that they do the best they can.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make rapid progress, especially in improving their speaking skills. Their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is at least as high as that of others by the end of Year 2.
- It is not just in English and mathematics that pupils make good progress. Artwork is of good quality and pupils know about the styles of different artists such as Arcimboldo. In physical education, pupils have good ball skills and participate enthusiastically in team games such as the 'FA Cup tournament' that started during the inspection.
- In science, history and geography, pupils produce good work most of the time, showing a good understanding of basic skills and knowledge such as how to carry out an investigation, draw a simple map or research historical facts. However, there are a few occasions when teachers do not expect enough of the pupils in these subjects and at these times work is not of the same high quality.

Early years provision

Good

- There have been good improvements in the early years provision since the previous inspection. Leaders have focused well on the right priorities and have secured good improvements. There is a good understanding of the most important next steps because leaders monitor provision carefully.

- Most children start school with skills, knowledge and understanding that are lower than is typical for their age. As a result of teaching that is carefully matched to their needs they make good progress and are being prepared well for life in Year 1. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development has been rising and was broadly average in 2016.
- Teaching has improved and is now good, both in the Nursery and Reception classes. Leaders have helped staff to improve their skills in teaching reading, writing and mathematics. Assessment processes are thorough and help staff to understand what they need to teach next. Carefully tailored support, partly funded by the early years pupil premium, ensures that disadvantaged children make the same good progress as others.
- Teachers very successfully introduce early literacy skills, especially in writing. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Children are now encouraged to write throughout the school day in the Nursery and Reception classes and they develop good skills. In the Reception classes, the most able children confidently write short stories which they willingly read to visitors. The less able begin to write short sentences, making good use of their secure phonics knowledge to attempt to spell new vocabulary.
- Children who start school with limited spoken English make good progress as they are provided with well-targeted support that focuses well on developing early language skills.
- The indoor environment is stimulating and inviting. Teachers make good use of resources to bring subjects alive. For example, children were highly motivated to sort fruit and vegetables because they were able to see and taste them rather than just working with pictures. Adults make good use of questioning to challenge children to think for themselves, but just occasionally there are missed opportunities to move learning on more quickly when children have already grasped a concept. This is most evident in mathematics activities.
- In the Nursery, a well-resourced outdoor area is used effectively most of the time to give children opportunities to explore their own ideas and to promote physical development. This is less well established in the Reception classes where there are insufficient opportunities for children to work outside, both when working in a group with an adult or working independently. Leaders know that this is the most important area for development within the early years provision.
- Through the early years, there is a very strong and effective focus on promoting personal, social and emotional development. This aspect of the curriculum is particularly strong. Children are friendly and confident and behave well. They persevere well on work, for example looking for spiders using magnifying glasses. In role play areas, children make good use of their imagination to explore new ideas.
- Adults have good expectations and focus strongly on teaching children about the importance of good behaviour and staying safe. As a result, children behave well and are happy at school. Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are thorough and there are no breaches of welfare arrangements.
- Parents are very pleased with early years provision and recent improvements. One parent summed up the view of others by writing that, 'I couldn't ask for a better start

to school life for my child.'

- Parents are especially appreciative of the advice about how what their children are learning and support offered to them by early years staff and the family workers team. They say that this helps them to support their children to learn at home.

School details

Unique reference number	139612
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	10031360

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	310
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carole Tompkins
Interim Principal	Sarah Green
Telephone number	01582 573641
Website	www.theferrarsacademy.co.uk/
Email address	head@ferrarsacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 & 26 June 2015

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 is a larger-than-average infant school with 10 classes. Children in the early years are taught in three Reception classes and in a Nursery.
- Most pupils are from minority ethnic groups, with the highest proportion being Pakistani. Around half of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is broadly average.

- The school's vice-principal became interim principal in January 2017 following the retirement of the previous post holder.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in lessons, many of which were observed jointly with the interim principal. In addition, the inspectors made some short visits to observe learning at other times.
- Discussions were held with pupils, staff and members of the governing body.
- The inspectors took account of the views of 40 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also talked with parents at the start of the school day.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read, looked at their work and school documents, including: the school's own information about pupils' learning and progress; planning and monitoring documents; the school development plan; records relating to behaviour and attendance; safeguarding information; and health and safety documentation.
- The inspectors analysed responses to inspection questionnaires from 18 members of staff.

Inspection team

Mike Capper, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Maher	Ofsted Inspector
Sandra Jones	Ofsted Inspector

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