

Woodland Middle School Academy

Malham Close, Flitwick, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK45 1NP

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- School leaders and governors have established a culture that challenges pupils to achieve well in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective.
- Governors have high expectations of staff and pupils. They provide support and challenge in equal measure.
- Teachers provide pupils with insightful feedback about their learning. Pupils know how well they are doing and how to improve their work.
- Pupils currently in the school are making good progress across a range of subjects.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are making good progress in English and mathematics. This is a significant improvement from previous years, when progress at the end of key stage 2 was below average.
- Work with other schools has ensured that teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics are appropriately challenging and support pupils in making good progress.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides opportunities for pupils to benefit from specialist teachers and facilities. The curriculum strongly supports pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- Support for pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. The school provides high-quality support to help pupils overcome difficulties that hinder their learning and progress.
- Most pupils enjoy school and attend regularly. Attendance is improving and is in line with the national average. For a small minority of pupils, absence is above average.
- Teachers use questioning that probes and deepens pupils' understanding but this is not consistent across subjects and year groups.
- Teachers challenge the most able pupils to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics. They provide fewer opportunities for other pupils to do so and these skills are therefore less well developed.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching and learning to support pupils in making even better progress so that attainment continues to rise by:
 - improving the consistency and quality of teachers' questioning across subjects and year groups by sharing the existing good practice within the school
 - providing more opportunities in mathematics for all groups of pupils to develop and apply their reasoning and problem-solving skills.
- Continue to improve the attendance of the small number of pupils who are persistently absent.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders and governors have high expectations of both pupils and staff in terms of achievement, well-being and support of the school's common values. The school's caring ethos is underpinned by 20 values, including respect, tolerance, compassion, fairness and love. These values prepare pupils for life in modern Britain by promoting their understanding of tolerance, respect for the rule of law, democracy and justice.
- School leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and areas for improvement in the school. Working alongside governors, they have taken appropriate actions to secure improvements in teaching. These actions are improving rates of progress for pupils currently in the school, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders' regular monitoring ensures that actions take place and that they are making a difference.
- Teachers with leadership responsibilities are effective in their roles. They understand the school's priorities for improvement and how they will contribute to achieving these.
- Systems for managing teachers' performance are rigorous and linked to whole-school priorities and the development needs of individual teachers. Senior leaders act swiftly to address underperformance by providing appropriate coaching and support. Teachers are positive about the programme of training and development provided for them.
- Pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs. They benefit from specialist teaching, for example in science, art and technology, from Year 5. This encourages pupils to produce high standards of work, particularly in art and technology. Parents are appreciative of the range of subjects offered in the curriculum.
- The school offers a variety of clubs, trips and activities covering sports and the arts. The opportunity to participate in school drama productions is a strength, with 160 pupils participating in recent productions. These activities, together with assemblies and tutor time, complement the curriculum and provide strong support for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The sports premium funding is used well. Pupils have access to good-quality physical education provision in key stage 2 delivered by specialist teachers. Funding is used to improve facilities and purchase equipment to introduce new activities, such as handball. Sporting clubs are available to all and the school has been successful in competitions against other schools.
- Funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities provides appropriate support for their individual needs. The special needs coordinator is well qualified and evaluates the impact of interventions rigorously. Well-targeted resources, small group work and work with individual pupils support academic, social and emotional development. Assessment information and inspectors' observations of learning indicate that pupils currently in the school are making good progress because of this support.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding that supports those pupils who did not achieve the expected standards in literacy or mathematics at the end of Year 6 provides small group support and access to specialist reading programmes. The school's assessment

information indicates that this is helping these pupils make up lost ground and inspection evidence confirms that this is the case.

- The pupil premium grant supports disadvantaged pupils effectively. School leaders have accurately identified the barriers to their learning, which include weak reading skills and poor attendance. Leaders closely monitor pupils' progress to evaluate the effectiveness of support provided. In some cases, this could be more precise to understand better the impact of individual actions taken.
- The school works in partnership with eight other schools as part of the 'Redborne Pyramid'. This provides a number of opportunities for leaders and teachers to share ideas and support one another. This has resulted, for example, in action taken to improve the teaching and assessment of mathematics in key stage 2 by ensuring that teachers give pupils appropriately challenging work. These changes are improving pupils' rates of progress.
- The school has also made use of the services of a school improvement partner who has provided useful training and support for governors and school leaders.

Governance of the school

- Governance has improved since the previous inspection. Governors understand their role and provide an appropriate level of support and challenge to senior leaders. They ensure that they have the skills needed to fulfil their role effectively and have accessed appropriate training and support, including training for the 'Prevent' duty and training from the school improvement partner regarding the interpretation of assessment information.
- Governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school and closely monitor the actions taken by senior leaders to check that they are having the effects intended. They closely monitor the use and effectiveness of the pupil premium grant, Year 7 catch-up funding, additional sports funding and the funding provided for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Governors are ambitious for both pupils and staff. They monitor the progress of pupils and have a good understanding of the school's assessment systems. Consequently, they can raise pertinent questions about the progress of groups of pupils. They ensure that senior leaders use the school's appraisal system appropriately to reward good teaching.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Senior leaders and governors have established a culture where pupils are safe and well cared for. Policies are up to date and meet the requirements of latest guidance. Pupils, parents and staff agree that pupils are safe and happy in school.
- Staff and governors receive appropriate training in how to keep pupils safe. Adults know the signs to look for and the procedures to follow if they have concerns about a pupil.
- Appropriate pre-employment checks take place before anyone takes up a post at the

school. Office staff carefully check the identity of visitors before allowing them to enter the school.

- Systems to keep pupils safe and refer them to other agencies such as social services are robust. Record-keeping is meticulous. The recording of dates, contacts, actions taken and the outcomes is appropriately detailed and accurate.
- Safeguarding forms part of the school curriculum. Pupils are taught about staying safe online, how to stay safe outside of school and the dangers of drugs and alcohol. Outside speakers, including the NSPCC, Bedfordshire Police and Childline, visit the school to run workshops and take assemblies.
- Pupils confirm that they feel safe in school. They are aware of how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. For example, a group of key stage 2 pupils showed sophisticated awareness of the potential risks of online gaming and of how to avoid these.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers routinely plan activities that are effective in supporting pupils' learning and use their subject knowledge to good effect. High expectations are evident across a range of subjects including English and mathematics. In art and design technology, teachers' high expectations and specialist knowledge ensure that pupils produce work of a high standard through challenging pupils to study a range of artists and their work and to develop their design and making skills.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are well developed. Pupils are confident learners. They feel secure enough to ask for help when it is required and to ask questions in order to deepen their understanding.
- Reading is well developed across the school. Pupils are encouraged to read in lessons in a number of subjects. Pupils who struggle with reading use their phonic skills to read unfamiliar words and are developing their comprehension skills so that they understand what they are reading. Pupils read for pleasure and pupils regularly use the library to read at lunchtimes.
- Teachers provide pupils with spoken and written feedback in line with the school's policy that is effective in supporting pupils' learning. It tells pupils how well they are doing and what they need to improve. Pupils consistently make improvements to their work in response to teachers' feedback. Examples of effective feedback targeted at supporting disadvantaged pupils to improve their understanding and achieve higher standards were seen in English, science and geography.
- Teaching provides effective support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and almost all teachers have high expectations of these pupils. As a result, most of these pupils are making good progress over time.
- Pupils understand the school's assessment system and the key performance indicators that indicate what knowledge, skills and understanding they are learning in any particular subject and so are able to recognise where they have made progress. However, a few parents indicated that they would like to have more information about the progress made by their children.

- Homework is set in both key stage 2 and key stage 3 in line with the school's policy. This was revised recently to take into account the views expressed by parents. Homework in key stage 3 is appropriately supporting pupils' learning in a range of subjects.
- Inspectors' observations of learning and scrutiny of pupils' work show that mathematics teaching is supporting all groups of pupils, including the disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs. Pupils develop fluency in their use and application of mathematics.
- The most able pupils have opportunities to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics. In an example seen in a Year 5 lesson when pupils were reviewing their homework, the teacher repeatedly asked pupils to justify their answers by drawing on their mathematical knowledge regarding geometry and their understanding of factors. However, this is not consistently evident for other pupils and so they do not have the same opportunities to develop these skills.
- The quality of questioning used to support learning is inconsistent. Examples of teachers using questions to both check understanding and extend pupils' ideas were seen in English, science and mathematics. However, some teachers allow pupils to give superficial answers that are not subject to further probing.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils' well-being and personal development are given a high priority by all staff. The school's ethos and values underpin this. Parents value the care provided to their children. This comment typifies the feelings of many parents: 'I believe Woodland to be a school embedded with good values and staff that put those values into practice every day in the outstanding way they treat the pupils in their care and the respect they give them.'
- The school is a fully inclusive community. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or have other additional needs are fully integrated into the community. Pupils spoken to during the inspection were accepting of difference and understood the meaning of tolerance and were welcoming to others. This reflects the views of staff and the very large majority of parents.
- The school is very supportive of pupils who have social, emotional and learning needs. The special needs coordinator, learning mentor and a dedicated team of staff ensure that pupils access the support they require, including support from outside agencies when needed. Pupils who have special educational needs can access extra help in 'The Maple Centre' and are provided with life skills lessons that support social development.
- Pupils say that they are happy in school and parents agree. One parent commented of her child: 'She goes to school with a skip in her stride and completely loves it here.'
- Pupils have positions of responsibility, for example as sports leaders and members of the school parliament. Trips and visits, the wide variety of clubs and activities provided and the range of sporting competitions contribute to pupils' health, social development

and well-being.

- The school provides pupils with opportunities to access guidance on the next stage of their education and careers education. For example, pupils in Year 8 attended a 'Skills show' in Birmingham that opened their eyes to opportunities they had not been aware of prior to the visit. The Year 7 personal, social, emotional, health and economic education programme includes a unit on careers and qualifications.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of what is meant by bullying in all its different forms. Pupils say that bullying is rare and that, when it does occur, teachers deal with it effectively. The school's records of incidents this year, which show few incidents and no individuals who have repeated bullying behaviour, support this. There are few incidents of a racist nature and the school deals with these appropriately.
- All pupils are taught how to stay safe and identify risks, including when accessing the internet or playing games online.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well around the school and at breaks and lunchtime. The canteen is an orderly and calm environment where pupils socialise in mixed groups. Pupils care for their environment and there is very little litter on, or around, the school site.
- Pupils value their education and attend regularly. Attendance is improving overall and is in line with the national average. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. This is because the school has admitted some pupils who have had poor attendance at their previous school. Evidence shows that the work of the school to support these pupils and their families is improving their attendance.
- Pupils arrive to lessons on time and ready to learn. Punctuality to school has improved due to raised expectations linked to consequences for lateness to school.
- Pupils say that behaviour in lessons is good and that there are few major incidents. They report that learning is sometimes disturbed by off-task discussion or lack of focus but that pupils respond quickly when teachers intervene. This is consistent with what inspectors saw during the inspection.
- Support for pupils who have challenging behaviour helps them to manage their behaviour well. The school works well with the families of these pupils and external organisations to provide them with the support and strategies that they need.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- School leaders use a national assessment programme to establish pupils' standards of

attainment when they join the school in Year 5. Teachers, subject leaders and senior leaders use this information to track pupils' progress from their different starting points.

- The school's assessment information and externally marked assessments indicate that pupils have made good progress by the time they leave the school in Year 8. The headteacher of the upper school confirmed that this information accurately reflects the standards attained by pupils when they enter his school.
- In 2016, results of national curriculum tests and teacher assessment showed that the progress made by Year 6 pupils varied for different groups of pupils and in different subjects. For example, the progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs in mathematics and writing was well below average. The proportion of the most able pupils attaining the highest standard was above the national average in reading and below average in writing and mathematics.
- The school's own assessment information and inspectors' scrutiny of work indicate that progress for current pupils has increased this year and this is more even across different groups of pupils.
- Pupils are able to write for a variety of purposes in different contexts and use spelling, punctuation and grammar with increasing accuracy.
- A greater proportion of the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are making good progress in a range of subjects. This is because teachers provide more opportunities for these pupils to reach higher standards and demonstrate their understanding.
- The most able pupils complete a GCSE in thinking and reasoning skills in Year 8 and pupils have been successful in doing so for a number of years.
- The work in pupils' books and folders shows that disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are making good progress in a range of subjects including English, mathematics, humanities and science. Most are attaining standards similar to those of other pupils nationally with similar starting points. This is because teachers know these pupils well and use information that allows them to monitor and track their progress and target interventions funded by the pupil premium grant to good effect.
- Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that most pupils who have special educational needs are making good progress in a range of subjects including English, mathematics and science. In English, this is because pupils have opportunities to develop and practise their writing skills in different contexts. In mathematics, pupils who have special educational needs in higher sets are making rapid progress because they are suitably challenged and enjoy the work. Pupils with lower levels of attainment are developing security and confidence in using basic mathematical operations.
- Pupils read well and enjoy reading. An inspector heard a group of Year 7 pupils of all abilities read. Those pupils who had not attained the standard expected in Year 6 could demonstrate improvement in their reading, as they now read confidently and with understanding. The catch-up funding is used well to support their progress. The most able pupils were able to read with fluency and comprehension, and show good levels of inference and deduction. All pupils showed genuine interest in the books that they were reading.

- Outcomes in art, sport and technology are a strength of the school with pupils producing products and performances of a high standard.
- Pupils and parents are positive about the progress that pupils make at the school.
- The most able pupils achieve well in mathematics and apply their reasoning and problem-solving skills. Other pupils do not sufficiently develop and apply these important skills.
- Although skilful questioning by some teachers checks pupils' understanding and helps pupils both deepen and demonstrate their understanding, this is not yet consistent across all subjects and year groups.

School details

Unique reference number	136560
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10031389

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	590
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Mandy Wilsmore
Headteacher	Jeff Conquest
Telephone number	01525 750400
Website	www.woodlandacademy.co.uk/
Email address	office@woodlandacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 March 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.
- The school is a smaller than average sized secondary school. (Although the school is a middle school, it is deemed a secondary school.)
- The very large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is small.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium grant is below average.

- The school meets current floor standards. These are the minimum standards set by the government for pupils' attainment and progress.
- No pupils are educated off site or through alternative provision.
- The school works closely with other local schools as part of the 'Redborne Pyramid'. The school also commissions the support of a consultant to act as a school improvement partner.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence about the progress that pupils make over time and the quality of teaching and learning in the school. They observed learning in all year groups over a range of subjects, including some jointly with school leaders. Inspectors visited three form tutor periods.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and spoke to pupils about their work in lessons.
- Inspectors looked at a range of the school's documents including assessment information, evaluation of the school's performance and information relating to the quality of teaching. Inspectors also considered the school's policies and procedures, including those relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors held meetings with groups of pupils from key stages 2 and 3 and spoke to pupils in lessons and when observing them at informal times, such as during lunchtime.
- Meetings were held with governors, senior and middle leaders and a group of newly qualified teachers and recently appointed teachers. The lead inspector met with the headteacher of Redborne Upper School and held a telephone conversation with a consultant working with the school as a school improvement partner.
- Inspectors considered the 251 responses to Parent View, including 143 free-text responses and two letters to the lead inspector.
- The views of 28 staff and 84 pupils who responded to online questionnaires were taken into account.

Inspection team

Paul Wilson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Brown	Ofsted Inspector
Caroline Pardy	Ofsted Inspector

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