

Alameda Middle School

Station Road, Ampthill, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK45 2QR

Inspection dates

12–13 July 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders' records of recruitment, selection and vetting of staff do not follow statutory guidance. The school's system for recording checks on staff is not rigorously followed.
- School leaders do not ensure that vetting processes are routinely followed. Some staff and visitors have incomplete or insufficient checks in place. This means that leaders and governors are not promoting all aspects of pupils' welfare effectively enough.
- Pupils' progress in science varies and is not as strong as in other subjects. Teaching in science is not yet consistently good.
- Governors have not checked the information they are provided with about the recruitment, selection and vetting of staff well enough. They were unaware of the weaknesses in the school's records and processes.
- Governors have not ensured that the website includes all the relevant and statutory information required.

The school has the following strengths

- In most subjects, across all year groups, most pupils make good progress. Some pupils receive extra help, and they make more progress than their peers nationally.
- Pupils at the end of Year 8 are well prepared to move into Year 9. They have positive attitudes to learning and a solid understanding of the subjects they have studied.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment typically meets the needs of the majority of pupils. Pupils of different abilities are provided with work which is suitably difficult and ensures that their learning develops well.
- Leaders have taken effective action to help pupils who fall behind in Year 6 to catch up in Year 7. These pupils make very good progress in Year 7 in English and mathematics.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They socialise well together and incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils are happy and confident when speaking with visitors.
- Leaders and governors have the capacity to improve the school. Their actions in response to areas of pupils' underperformance are effective.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management and provision for pupils' welfare by:
 - ensuring that all people with access to pupils in the school are appropriately vetted
 - making sure that all checks are correctly recorded on the school's single central record and routinely checked by governors
 - following best practice for the recruitment and selection of staff
 - ensuring that the website is consistently up to date and includes the relevant statutory information.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that teachers use their assessment information to plan learning that meets the needs of individual pupils in science so that they make good progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not taken effective steps to ensure that people who work with pupils in the school have been properly checked. The school's statutory record of recruitment vetting does not include all employees. Some adults in the school do not have appropriate checks in place. Because of this, leaders cannot be sure that all adults in the school are suitable to have access to pupils.
- In assessing some staff for appointments, basic checks are not carried out consistently enough. For example, gaps in the employment history of candidates are not always explored. As a result, senior leaders cannot be sure that staff have given an accurate account of their backgrounds.
- There is a clear link between the improvement planning of leaders and governors and the performance management of staff. Individual staff targets are based on overall school objectives. Leaders provide tailored professional development for staff to ensure that they can meet their targets. Staff at all levels, from newly qualified teachers to middle leaders, are given appropriate training which helps to improve their practice.
- There are strong partnerships between the leaders of Alameda Middle School and the other schools in the local three-tier education system. Leaders from the schools work together strategically to plan the curriculum and the assessment strategy so that pupils' educational journey is a continuous experience. Pupils study a range of topics following national curriculum guidelines and are ready at the end of Year 8 to move smoothly into Year 9 at their new school.
- Leaders provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils with different interests to be involved in extra-curricular activities. For example, over 250 pupils are learning to play musical instruments. There is an after-school astronomy club leading to a GCSE qualification and pupils tour local schools in a dance group. Pupils experience a number of trips and visits, such as to London and France. They increase their understanding of British values through participating in mock elections, such as at the time of the general election and the referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union. Pupils' wide-ranging experiences prepare them well for later life.
- Leaders use lesson time, form time and assemblies effectively to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. For example, in one assembly, pupils were asked to consider life from the point of view of someone who has autistic spectrum disorder. In another, they reflected on the resilience needed to be successful. In form time, pupils are encouraged to share things of which they are proud, and to feel positive about themselves. Pupils spoke positively about the 'values vouchers' they can receive for demonstrating one of the school's values, such as caring or dedication.
- In 2016, leaders accurately identified the need to improve boys' achievement. They effectively implemented a range of actions that were successfully evaluated. Governors tracked the impact of this work closely. As a consequence, boys' attainment has now notably improved.
- Year 7 funding to improve literacy and numeracy has been used to good effect. All pupils who were not attaining at the level expected for their age at the end of Year 6

were given additional support, either in small groups or individually. As a result, the progress of these pupils is now rapid and they have caught up with their peers in reading, writing and mathematics.

- Leaders' use of funding to support disadvantaged pupils ensures that they usually make progress in line with other pupils nationally and that, in some instances, their attainment improves markedly. All disadvantaged pupils have a person identified to help them and so their needs are better understood. This allows leaders to remove barriers to their learning. Subject leaders regularly monitor and report to the headteacher on the progress disadvantaged pupils are making. As a consequence, the previously low attainment of disadvantaged pupils is continuing to rise and is closer to national averages.
- Funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is now being spent effectively by leaders. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are increasingly well supported. Leaders now have a better understanding of these pupils' needs and share this information routinely with teachers. Teaching assistants receive useful training to help pupils make the progress they should. This is beginning to have an impact in lessons where the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have been carefully planned for.
- The use of physical education and sport premium funding is carefully planned and has a positive impact on the uptake of sport. A very high proportion of pupils now attend a sports club during the year. Activities such as the 'healthy selfie' are used to encourage healthy lifestyles through engagement in sporting activity, while the 'bikeability' programme has been put in place to meet local needs in a growing town and the national priority of reducing obesity.

Governance of the school

- Governors have not effectively held senior leaders to account for the processes followed in recruiting and selecting staff, or in vetting individuals who come into contact with pupils at the school. These processes are not as secure as they should be.
- The governing body has not ensured that the information on the school's website is compliant with statutory expectations. For example, too little information is provided about the content of the curriculum and about examination and assessment results.
- Governors have the capacity to secure ongoing improvements in the school. They have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' achievement. Their continued focus on raising standards has had a demonstrably positive effect on the outcomes of pupils.
- Governors hold school leaders effectively to account for pupils' achievement. They monitor the impact of leaders' actions regularly, and challenge underperformance effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- Leaders do not manage staff recruitment, selection and vetting processes well. These systems require improvement to be good. However, safeguarding overall is effective because leaders ensure that other policies and practices for securing the safety of pupils are effective.
- Staff have up-to-date training on their 'Prevent' duty and basic training on how to keep children safe. Systems for staff to record any concerns are clear, well understood and consistently followed. Staff demonstrate care and commitment and understand the importance of their roles in safeguarding pupils. Leaders seek support from external agencies when required and are persistent at following these up if they do not feel that the best interests of pupils have been served.
- Pupils reported that they feel safe. They demonstrated insight into the purpose of the school's lockdown plan. They explained how the school teaches them to keep safe, such as with internet safety in computer science lessons, assemblies and form tutor periods. Pupils stated that one of the best things about the school was that it felt safe.
- Most parents who responded to Ofsted's survey, Parent View, agreed that their children feel safe at school. Most pupils who responded to their survey also stated that they feel safe at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Subjects are mostly taught by subject specialists and, where this is not the case, teachers follow strong plans which ensure that pupils' understanding of the subject develops well. Therefore, pupils in all year groups develop secure knowledge across the curriculum. By the time they reach the end of Year 8, they have a good foundation on which to base further study in key stage 4.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils. In most lessons, they set work which supports pupils of different abilities well. Work is hard enough to help the most able to make good progress, and structured appropriately to help those who find it more difficult. Pupils of all abilities are expected to rise to the challenge of the work.
- Teachers make good use of questioning to build on what pupils already know and to develop their thinking further. Pupils gain greater insight into issues and problems as a result. They are able to explain their knowledge and understanding accurately and articulately.
- Across the school, teachers develop positive relationships with pupils, which underpin their ability to learn. Teachers make good use of praise, which pupils enjoy. This encourages pupils to behave well and engage in class discussions.
- Most lessons are well planned and stimulate pupils' interest. Pupils respond well. They are inspired to want to learn and produce high-quality work as a result.
- Teaching assistants provide valuable support in some lessons and help pupils to access their work. As a result of additional training, teaching assistants are good at helping pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to access their work. When they receive this support, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.
- In a minority of lessons, including some science lessons, teachers do not consider

pupils' different needs and abilities carefully enough. Where this is the case, work is less tidy, pupils are more readily distracted and fewer pupils achieve as much as they should.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- Leaders' work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. This is because leaders do not do enough to promote all aspects of pupils' welfare. Leaders do not have effective systems in place for vetting staff and others who may come into contact with pupils and so cannot be sure that it is appropriate for them to do so.
- Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education when they leave Year 8. The curriculum of Alameda Middle School is carefully considered and pupils are well taught. Pupils said that they feel well prepared, both emotionally and academically, to move on to the nearby upper school. They are well placed to continue to make good progress at key stage 4.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They want to learn and they enjoy activities which make them think. In lessons, pupils often display highly positive behaviour because they are expected to work hard. Pupils identified the fact that work was thought-provoking as a strength of the school.
- Pupils are encouraged to reflect on and celebrate what makes them feel proud. They are rewarded for behaving well and are encouraged to participate in discussions and extra-curricular activities. This leads to pupils becoming confident learners.
- Pupils' physical well-being is developed through activities promoting healthy lifestyles. The take-up of extra-curricular sport is high and leaders seek out opportunities to develop this even further.
- Pupils feel safe. They explained that there are no parts of the school which feel unsafe. Pupils know what bullying is and explained that bullying is rare. They said that, when bullying does happen, leaders take effective action to resolve it.
- Leaders have allocated curriculum time to 'values' sessions, which cover topics such as caring, freedom and dedication. Form time and assemblies are used to develop these themes further. In lessons, teachers take opportunities to explore topics such as sexual identity, conflict and different cultures. As a result, pupils develop a good understanding of fundamental British values.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are enthusiastic about learning. They arrive at lessons on time and ready to learn. They behave well in lessons. Low-level disruption is rare and most lessons take place uninterrupted by poor behaviour. Where teaching is strongest, behaviour is exemplary.
- Systems to support good behaviour work well. Teachers are quick to deal with inappropriate behaviour and their actions are effective. Pupils welcome teachers'

praise, the merit scheme and the 'values vouchers'. They appreciate the rewards they get for behaving well.

- Leaders monitor attendance carefully. They have clear systems for identifying early pupils at risk of becoming persistent absentees and take steps to prevent this from occurring. Leaders have accurately identified a need to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and boys and have taken effective action to do so. There are regular attendance competitions, routine discussions in form tutor time about attendance and rewards such as cards and certificates. As a result, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and boys has improved.
- Behaviour around the school is calm and orderly. This contributes to an environment in which pupils feel safe and which is conducive to learning.
- Pupils are welcoming to visitors and speak positively about their school. They said that behaviour is good and that the positive environment of the school is one of its strengths.
- On the rare occasions when the work is not suited to their abilities, some pupils become inattentive. This interrupts their progress, but rarely interrupts the progress of others.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils of all abilities, including the most able, make good progress in most subjects across the curriculum from arriving in Year 5 to leaving in Year 8. Leaders and teachers have high expectations and pupils leave the school with good levels of attainment. They are well prepared for key stage 4 study.
- In the past, boys underachieved at key stage 2. Leaders put in place a range of strategies to improve this and these have been successful. Boys' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at key stage 2 is now stronger and boys attain in line with all pupils nationally.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making progress in line with other pupils across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, because most teaching meets their needs well. At key stage 2, there has been a significant improvement in the attainment of disadvantaged middle and higher prior-attaining pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. This is now in line with other pupils nationally.
- Pupils who did not achieve at the standard expected for their age in Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics have been given extra help. As a result of this, they have made good progress and have caught up with other pupils in Year 7.
- Pupils are encouraged to read widely and often and most read at home. A reading club in school allows more gifted readers to help those who struggle, and pupils are able to describe a range of materials which they read.
- Progress in science is not as strong as in other subjects because teaching does not consistently meet the needs and abilities of different pupils.
- In the past, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have not achieved well enough at the school. Leaders now have a good understanding of the

needs of these pupils and their attainment is beginning to improve. In subjects where newly introduced strategies to support these pupils are used, they make good progress.

School details

Unique reference number	137249
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10031607

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	694
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jonathan Leaper
Headteacher	Maxine Warner
Telephone number	01525 750 900
Website	www.alamedamiddleschool.org.uk
Email address	mwarner@alamedamiddleschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 November 2013

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about its accessibility plan, its special educational needs and/or disabilities information report, its curriculum or its examination and assessment results on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about their equality objectives or financial information.
- Alameda Middle School is a smaller-than-average secondary school serving the area of Ampthill.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average.
- The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is broadly average.

- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 36 lessons, sometimes accompanied by the school's senior leaders, to observe pupils' learning. They also reviewed the work of a range of pupils in their books, listened to pupils read and visited an assembly.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, five governors, the school's improvement consultant and teachers.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils in groups and individually across different age groups.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation summary, minutes of governing body meetings and performance information. They reviewed behaviour and attendance records with leaders.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's single central record of recruitment checks.
- Inspectors considered 206 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also considered 183 responses to the online pupil questionnaire and 30 responses to the online staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

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