

The Radcliffe School

Aylesbury Street West, Wolverton, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK12 5BT

Inspection dates

21–22 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not taken urgent and effective action to overcome the weaknesses that were identified at the time of the previous inspection.
- Pupils do not make consistently good progress across different subjects. Although outcomes in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 11 are broadly average, pupils' progress in other subjects and year groups is not routinely good enough.
- Additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is not used effectively. Leaders do not check carefully to see what difference their work makes. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils make less progress than others in the school in most of their subjects.
- Teaching is not consistently effective across the school. Teachers' expectations, both for pupils' class work and homework, are too low. Consequently, pupils often produce work of a low standard that is very untidy.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is inaccurate and often overly generous. Pupils are therefore not guided on how to achieve the highest grades.
- Some groups of pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should. The attendance of some year groups, and particularly those who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is below the national average.
- Students in the sixth form do not achieve as well as they should.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have created a welcoming, motivating and supportive atmosphere in the school. Staff, some of whom are new to the school, are working hard to bring about improvements.
- Pupils feel safe in a harmonious environment that celebrates diversity and mutual respect.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced by learning in lessons, assemblies, tutorial time and after-school activities.
- The headteacher has successfully recruited skilled and committed staff to key roles in the school. New leaders in English and science are improving the quality of teaching in their subject areas. This is beginning to lead to pupils making increasingly rapid progress
- Leaders have adapted the curriculum to increase its academic rigour. As a result, increasing numbers of pupils achieve qualifications across a broad range of subjects.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, so that:
 - governors fully understand the plans for school improvement and hold leaders to account for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and for the progress of disadvantaged pupils
 - there is a clear plan for the use of additional money to support pupils who are disadvantaged, and that the impact is closely monitored
 - pupils attend school more regularly, particularly those groups whose attendance is below average.
- Improve the progress that pupils and students make, by:
 - making clear to pupils and students teachers' high expectations of the standard of work to be produced in class and for homework
 - systematically sharing strengths in teaching so that pupils and students perform equally well in all subjects from their different starting points
 - reviewing how accurately pupils' and students' work is assessed and providing them with clear guidance on how to reach their potential.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not acted quickly enough on the areas for improvement from the last inspection. Their evaluation of the school's effectiveness is not systematic and accurate. As a result, staff and governors do not have a shared understanding of where the most urgent actions for improvement are needed.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders have been too slow in checking, with external support, the difference their use of the pupil premium is making. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils have continued to perform below the standards achieved by their peers.
- Leaders have not constructed clear plans for the use of additional money to help pupils who enter the school in Year 7 needing to catch up in literacy and numeracy. Plans are now in place to encourage all pupils to read more but it is too soon for the impact of this to be evaluated.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has been affected by many changes to staffing. Some pupils have not been regularly taught by experienced teachers for extended periods of time. Leaders have been slow to implement plans to share effective practice to address inconsistencies in teachers' skills.
- Leadership of the sixth form was adversely affected by a period of staff turbulence. This contributed to a decline in students' AS- and A-level results. A new head of sixth form has started vigorously to address some of the weaknesses that were causing concern.
- The headteacher has skilfully filled vacancies with staff who have the experience to teach specialist subjects. In addition, he has waited courageously to find leaders who are committed to the schools' vision and values. New staff are beginning to bring about improvements to the standards in the school.
- Leaders and managers work energetically and are committed to improving the school. New senior and middle leaders who have joined the school have added strength to the team. Some have not been in post long enough to have put their sound proposals for improvement into practice.
- Pupils' transition from primary schools is led well and the new Year 7 pupils have settled into school quickly. Leaders provide a programme of activities in the summer holiday to help pupils who may find transition difficult.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective. Leaders ensure that additional funding is used well to provide pupils with the extra help and care they need. A team of suitably qualified teachers and teaching assistants looks after pupils well and provides for their individual needs.
- Leaders have revised the curriculum so that pupils can be better prepared for the next stage in their education. Consequently, more pupils are now studying a broad range of subjects, including science and modern foreign languages. Although the proportion of pupils achieving five good passes in academic subjects has been low in the past, it is predicted to rise steadily.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 10 study a course devised by their teachers entitled 'Modern

Britain'. Through this, assemblies and tutorial activities, pupils know how to protect themselves from harm, follow healthy lifestyles and understand the meaning of democracy, tolerance and diversity. Some pupils in Years 9 and 10 know more than others about modern dangers, such as radicalisation, grooming and child exploitation, because the topics are covered in subjects that are optional.

- Pupils' experiences of school are enriched with a wide programme of additional activities. They participate in a full range options including sports, music and drama. Pupils also have opportunities to go on residential trips to foreign countries. The library is busy at lunchtime with pupils borrowing books and teachers providing additional support for pupils where needed.
- Staff skills are enhanced through a programme of professional development that is valued by most staff. Training is provided by the school's teachers, staff from other local schools, representatives from the local authority and other organisations. The impact of some training is noticeable, including the whole-school focus on oracy.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have good opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills. Consequently, pupils are comfortable to express their views and have a high level of moral awareness.

Governance of the school

- Although governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of different subjects, they do not have clear oversight of the school's priorities for improvement. Consequently, they have not held leaders sufficiently to account about the urgency and impact of their actions to improve the school.
- Governors understand their statutory duties. They have recently conducted a very thorough safeguarding audit, to ensure practice is suitable. Minutes from their meetings suggest they have not routinely challenged leaders about the difference their work is making.
- Recently appointed governors have strengthened the skills and knowledge of the governing body. Governors are keen to improve their effectiveness, and have sought external support to help them identify how to support the school increasingly well.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Parents, pupils and staff are confident that the school is a safe environment.
- Leaders and governors make rigorous checks to be sure that people working in the school are suitable and appropriately trained. Staff with specific responsibilities for safeguarding and child protection work closely with the local authority and other agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils are protected properly.
- Pupils feel well supported by a team of pastoral leaders. Pupils trust pastoral leaders and trained pupils to prevent bullying. They trust that inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with effectively if it should occur.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers' expectations of pupils are too low and are not often shared. Therefore, pupils are unclear about the standard of work they should produce and how carefully it should be presented, in class and for homework.
- Homework does not consistently support pupils' learning in class. Most pupils respond well to homework that continues learning from their lessons but the effort they make in completing it varies considerably.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is often overly generous and, therefore, pupils are not aware that they need to raise the standard of their work in order to reach the highest grades in examinations.
- Teachers do not always use the detailed and helpful information provided by leaders to support their planning. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not supported routinely and effectively to make rapid progress.
- Approaches to learning sometimes do not engage pupils in Years 7 and 8. Teaching is overly focused on what pupils need to achieve by the end of Year 11. Pupils then do not make good progress because they are bored.
- Teachers have sound subject knowledge and those who are new or training work hard to match the skills of those who are more experienced. New teachers feel that they are supported well by their colleagues in all aspects of their roles.
- Teachers have purposeful relationships with their pupils. As a result, in most lessons, pupils listen intently and are respectful of staff and peers. Poor behaviour in lessons is unusual and pupils told inspectors that most staff are good at preventing disruptions.
- Where teachers have a clear understanding of pupils' prior learning, they plan work that leads pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding of subjects. In a mathematics lesson, for example, it was clear that the teacher knew how well individual pupils had achieved in their primary schools and was able to engage with and challenge them appropriately. However, in some lessons the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged because the pace of learning is too slow and tasks are repetitive.
- Where pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are assisted by additional adults, they are confident and participate so they are able to learn as well as others.
- Some middle leaders and teachers work together to check pupils' work and how teachers' guidance helps to develop pupils' skills. Where teachers routinely look at pupils' work across a range of subjects, it frequently raises their expectations for what pupils can achieve in their subject area.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Members of staff work collectively to create the 'community feel' of the school that pupils and parents enjoy.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They trust the pastoral team members and their tutors to look after them well and to provide support when they need it. Most pupils feel that there is an adult in school who they can talk to if they require help with a problem.
- Most pupils have no concerns about bullying. Pupils in Year 10 spoke proudly about how they challenge the use of intimidating language, without needing to be reminded by teachers.
- Pupils are proud of the way in which they support one another. Praise is given to the 'A2B' group who are trained to provide assistance to help others feel safe. Their presence around the school is particularly welcomed by younger pupils. Students in the sixth form are linked to tutor groups and engage with younger pupils to help them with literacy and numeracy.
- Pupils benefit from learning about how to keep themselves safe, now and in adult life. A rich programme that includes topics such as healthy eating, misuse of drugs and alcohol, resilience, consent in sexual relationships and citizenship in modern Britain is much appreciated by the pupils.
- Pupils who are attached to 'The Base' behave well in lessons alongside their peers because of the exceptional support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants.
- Pupils now have the opportunity to access careers advice, information and guidance that help them to prepare well for their next stage in education. An extensive series of events provides pupils with impartial and specialist advice from Year 7 to Year 13. Consequently, the percentages of the school's pupils who enter apprenticeships, go on to colleges of further education or enter universities after leaving school are slightly above the national average.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils move around the school safely and respectfully, under the supervision of staff. They are polite to one another, staff and visitors. Areas that are busy at times, for example the canteen at breaktime, are noisy with social chat, but pupils are not boisterous.
- Pupils' attendance overall is slightly below the national average. Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not come to school as often as they should. The headteacher has appointed a new member of staff who has appropriate experience to make a difference to the attendance of individual pupils.
- Leaders have put strategies in place to reduce the percentage of pupils who are excluded from school. Pupils may spend time in the school's 'personalised learning centre' to help them refocus before returning to their normal lessons. Where appropriate, pupils move to alternative provision where they receive more specialised

support. Leaders engage effectively with 'The Bridge', monitoring pupils' attendance and progress regularly. As a result, pupils' attendance has improved and they are able to continue in education.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- For the past few years, pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of key stage 4 has not been good enough.
- At the end of Year 11 in 2016, pupils' GCSE results improved slightly overall on the previous year but pupils' progress across their best eight subjects was below the national average.
- Disadvantaged pupils did not achieve as well others in the school in 2016 and the difference increased in 2017. In 2017, fewer disadvantaged pupils achieved a good pass across a range of subjects than was the case for other pupils in the school and nationally.
- Across years 7 to 11, there is inconsistency in the progress pupils are making in their different subjects. In some subjects, disadvantaged pupils make less progress than other pupils from their different starting points. This is most frequently related to the low expectations teachers have of them.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders prepare detailed information about the support pupils need to help them make progress in lessons but they are not often used by teachers in their planning.
- In 2016, very few pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities were entered for and achieved qualifications across the core set of academic subjects. Leaders have changed the curriculum to reduce the likelihood of this occurring again in the future.
- Progress made by the most able pupils is relative to the degree of challenge they are presented with in lessons. In too many lessons, pupils are not set difficult work that helps them to reach the highest grades.
- Outcomes in science improved notably by the end of Year 11 in 2017. An increasing proportion of pupils entered for and achieved a good pass in GCSE biology, chemistry and physics. This reflects the increasingly high aspirations for the most able pupils.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- The sixth form requires improvement because some students, especially those who are disadvantaged, do not make fast enough progress to fulfil their potential in all subjects.
- AS- and A-level results declined in 2017. The decline was mainly caused by an inappropriate decision, by leaders and governors, to enter students for courses that were unsuitable for their needs.
- Achievement varies between subjects. For example, in 2016 students who studied work-related subjects made faster progress than other students. In 2017, students' achievement in A levels in English literature, history, geography, creative writing and

German was much better than in other subjects.

- The percentage of students remaining in the sixth form at the end of Year 12 is low, compared to other provision nationally, although it is increased by including those who return to repeat the year. In 2016, students who entered the sixth form without gaining a GCSE grade C in English and mathematics all improved their grades.
- Previously, students' attendance was low and they frequently missed enrichment courses, including personal, social and health education. New protocols are now in place and students are attending much more frequently.
- Leaders have taken decisive actions to bring about improvement in the sixth form by making a strong appointment to lead the provision. Priorities for improvement have been quickly identified and effective plans are already having an impact on students' engagement in learning.
- Sixth-form teachers have detailed knowledge of work-related and academic subjects and they use it to form questions that challenge the students. Students respond well in lessons and follow teachers' advice to improve their work.
- Students enjoy the opportunities to become involved in the whole school by helping younger pupils to improve their literacy and numeracy and supporting those who have anxieties about behaviour. Students have not previously been given opportunities to participate in work experience.
- Students receive a comprehensive programme of careers advice and guidance. As a result, the percentage who go on to universities, apprenticeships and further learning is slightly higher than the national average.

School details

Unique reference number	110532
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10036944

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,230
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	181
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of Governors	Paul Critchley
Headteacher	Nabil Chaaban
Telephone number	01908 682222
Website	http://radcliffeschool.org.uk/
Email address	admin@radcliffeschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 November 2015

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about pupils' performance in examination, admissions arrangements, promotion of the equality of opportunity, or how it intends to spend pupil premium funding on its website.
- In 2016, the school met the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school, based on key stage 4 academic performance in 2014, 2015 and 2016.
- In 2016, the school met the current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school includes an additionally resourced provision for 15 pupils who have special educational needs, specifically autistic spectrum disorders.

- The school works with two providers of alternative provision. Twenty-one pupils attend 'The Bridge Academy' or are educated part-time at 'The Christian Foundation'.
- Prior to the inspection, leaders and governors had already arranged for the external reviews of governance and pupil premium and therefore such recommendations are not included in this report.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 44 lessons across a range of subjects. Some of these observations were carried out jointly with school leaders. Inspectors visited 'The Base', the specialist on-site provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, and made a phone call to 'The Bridge Academy' alternative provision, which is attended by 20 pupils.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, subject teachers, newly qualified teachers and support staff. Discussions took place with governors and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors also met with groups of pupils, and spoke to pupils informally during break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors worked alongside school leaders to scrutinise a range of work from pupils in Year 8 and Year 11. Work in books was also looked at during lessons.
- A wide range of documentary evidence was reviewed, including the school's plan for improvement, a range of policies, safeguarding records, teaching and learning monitoring information and pupils' performance information. The school's single central record was also checked.
- Inspectors took account of the 44 responses to Parent View as well as the comments received via the free-text facility, 42 staff survey responses and 80 pupil questionnaire responses.

Inspection team

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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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