

# Wootton Upper School

Hall End Road, Wootton, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK43 9HT

## Inspection dates

7–8 November 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders have established a culture of high aspirations, at all levels. They are relentless in their focus on continuous and rapid improvement.
- The trust and governors provide clear, strategic leadership. They correctly challenge school leaders where they consider provision needs improving.
- Leaders have taken firm action to improve pupils' behaviour, which is now good. Pupils are proud of their school. They work hard; they are tolerant and respectful to adults and each other.
- Leaders have brought about swift and sustained improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Most teachers have strong subject knowledge. Their sophisticated, high-level questioning challenges pupils' thinking.
- Attainment has risen because teaching is effective. Pupils make good progress, particularly in English and science.
- The school supports pupils' well-being systematically. As a result, pupils are confident and feel safe.
- Safeguarding arrangements are very thorough. Good support for vulnerable pupils ensures that they make good progress.
- Good support of leaders for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is having a positive impact on their attainment and progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work collectively to ensure that all pupils succeed. They work together effectively to support pupils' learning in lessons.
- Pupils enjoy school. The majority attend regularly. Well-established procedures are in place to improve the attendance of a small minority of pupils who are regularly absent.
- The very well-planned curriculum offers a wide range of opportunities. Teachers guide pupils to make informed choices before entering the school and at the end of Year 9.
- The school works closely with its trust partner to ensure that pupils have a smooth transition into sixth form studies.
- Parents show good support for the school. A small minority of parents do not feel that the communication is as effective as it could be.
- Teachers' planning aims to support pupils of differing abilities. In English and physical education (PE), teachers implement their plans to support pupils' individual needs. This good practice was not observed in all subjects.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment further by:
  - ensuring that all teachers provide tasks suited to the pupils' different abilities and monitor the impact that this has on improving the progress pupils make
  - continuing to improve the attendance of pupils in all year groups so that all pupils meet or exceed national expectations for attendance.
  
- Develop stronger links with parents by communicating with them more often about how well their children are doing and by increasing the opportunities for parents to come into school and meet with staff.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Leaders and governors are ambitious for pupils. They have a deep understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and work together to make improvements. As a result, most pupils make good progress across a wide range of subjects, particularly in English and science.
- The executive principal oversees both Wootton Upper School and Kimberley 16–19 STEM College. His experienced leadership challenges staff to uphold the school motto, 'the pursuit of excellence', so that all pupils can aspire to achieve.
- Since the last inspection, the trust and executive principal have appointed some outstanding new leaders. They are making significant improvements in the school and work closely with the executive principal to ensure that the school continues to improve.
- Self-evaluation is largely accurate. Leaders understand their priorities for improvement. Their actions have ensured that the school is improving and that there are clear ways forward for the school.
- The majority of parents and carers who sent free texts during the inspection, or responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, praised the work of the school. They agree that the school is well led and managed. Parents would recommend the school to others and a view was expressed that 'senior leaders and governors have turned around' the school. Some parents would like school leaders to supply more timely information.
- Almost all staff who completed Ofsted's online survey agreed that the school is calm and aspirational for all pupils.
- Leaders and governors have designed a tailored curriculum which allows pupils to choose from a wide range of optional subjects. Pupils make individual, guided choices while in their feeder school. This enables pupils to make a smooth transition into the upper school and study the right choice of subjects in which they can succeed. Further choices in Year 9 allow the pupils to study subjects that interest them at GCSE.
- There is a well-planned transition programme to 16–19 education, which considers each individual's needs and the appropriate next step for them. The principal of the trust college works closely with the school leadership team and is a regular contributor to school assemblies. The result is that the majority of pupils move to the trust college at the end of Year 11. Other pupils choose to study vocational courses or undertake an apprenticeship elsewhere.
- Regular professional development of teachers has led to teaching that is robust and effective. Leadership of this area is strong; staff appraisal, lesson observation and learning walks have helped leaders to identify where teaching requires improving. Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and can identify where improvements should be made.
- Training has helped teachers to plan lessons that engage pupils fully and help them to achieve. Leaders' raised expectations of teachers' planning has resulted in improved

outcomes in 21 out of 30 GCSE subjects.

- Leaders and governors manage the performance of staff well. Staff have rigorous performance targets, linked to pupil attainment and progress and their own development needs. As a result, the quality of teaching across the school continues to improve.
- The leadership of assessment and recording is particularly strong. The vice-principal and the manager of assessment information monitor assessments made by teachers. This enables teachers to plan lessons matched to pupils' needs.
- An extensive extra-curricular programme underpins pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, an assembly focusing on Remembrance Day developed a sense of respect for those killed in battle and highlighted links with local residents killed in war. There are links with a school in Germany, celebrations of a variety of religious festivals and strong pupil involvement in the school, through the 'student leaders' and a 'student parliament'. The 'student leaders' are good role models and present a very positive view of the school and can explain how the school has improved.
- There is effective use of the funding for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The high expectations of the special educational needs and/or disabilities co-ordinator have resulted in appropriate support for these pupils and a 'pupil profile' for their special educational need and/or disability. Teachers use this 'pupil profile' to plan precisely and deploy a cohesive team of teaching assistants who offer targeted support. As a result, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress from their starting points and are confident, assured learners.
- Leaders' actions to support disadvantaged pupils in the school are beginning to flourish. Training has enabled teachers to plan lessons that match the needs of their disadvantaged pupils and help them to achieve as well as others. Leaders have used the funding to engage with the families of disadvantaged pupils and provide tailored support for individuals through curriculum provision and trips. Some of these strategies are relatively new but attendance is improving for these pupils.
- Leaders monitor homework carefully. They expect homework to consolidate learning in the classroom. A teacher reminded pupils of this expectation during a textiles lesson observed by the inspectors.
- Leaders have the capacity to strengthen leadership across the school and know what actions they need to take to do this. In some subjects, middle leadership is not fully effective. Senior leaders are supporting and challenging these leaders to increase their effectiveness.
- Through increasing staffing levels, leaders are taking steps to improve the quality of teaching in mathematics so that pupils achieve equally as well as they do in English and science.
- Leaders have commissioned external advisers to moderate their actions, particularly their 'quality first' programme for improving teaching. The local authority has provided effective support for the school. They have confidence in leaders and feel that under their leadership the school is improving rapidly.

- There is effective structured support for newly qualified teachers. They appreciate the work of the vice-principals, who, they agree, have brought a sense of strength and purpose to the school.

## **Governance of the school**

- Wootton Academy Trust operates a local governing body with specific responsibility for Wootton Upper School. The trust has actively sought to strengthen governance by attracting new governors who can act in the best interests of the school and its pupils. There is a clear scheme of delegation so both groups know their areas of responsibility, and their systematic communication ensures that governance is effective and efficient.
- The executive principal reports to the trust formally twice a year. Trust leaders keep a regular check on standards and take early action to challenge senior leaders.
- Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. There is a culture of 'support and challenge' so that governors take effective actions to support the school in making improvements.
- The safeguarding governor has made a positive impact on policies and procedures surrounding child protection. The trust has made a substantial investment in new perimeter fencing and gates to improve site safety.
- Governors promote the school's standing in the local community and its relationship with parents. They encourage links with the local community, for example through the use of the school site out of hours, welcoming senior citizens into the school and visits to the local church. They recognise that the school could refine its procedures for communicating with parents.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff and governors undertake safeguarding training and receive regular updates to ensure that they have a current understanding of child protection procedures.
- Senior leaders' actions to ensure that pupils are safe are evident throughout the school. Pupils receive guidance on how to keep themselves safe. Leaders identify specific risks which may affect pupils who attend this school, and work effectively to reduce those risks.
- Leaders responsible for safeguarding have a high level of expertise. They keep accurate records, diligently follow up cases and work closely with external agencies to support pupils in need. They monitor the impact of help for individuals to ensure that pupil well-being is improved.
- Pupils report that extremely rare occurrences of bullying are effectively resolved. Leaders have established a strong culture of respect and tolerance and pupils value this.
- The school's 'well-being centre' provides a safe place for pupils to go to if they want to talk to somebody.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- In most subjects, effective teaching, learning and assessment support pupils to make good progress. Teachers have high expectations of how pupils should behave. They are consistent in applying the school's behaviour policy. As a result, classrooms are mutually respectful environments that encourage learning.
- Pupils speak positively of their teachers and think that teaching has improved. They appreciate teachers' support and enjoy their lessons. One pupil said, 'teachers believe you can do well'. As a result, pupils behave well and make progress.
- Teachers give feedback in line with the school policy that gives the pupils clear steps of improvement towards their target grades. In lessons, pupils support each other and work willingly together to complete or improve their work. When looking at each other's work, they can learn from each other and identify the next steps. Pupils' work shows an improvement in skills and knowledge over time.
- Many teachers have strong subject knowledge and use it effectively to build pupils' skills, reasoning and understanding. This is particularly strong in PE, history, art and English.
- Teachers ask questions which challenge pupils' thinking. This is having a positive impact in the classroom. Not all teachers provide this level of challenge, but in English, drama and PE lessons, there is an expectation that pupils will respond in depth. In an English poetry lesson, sophisticated questioning ensured challenge for pupils to reach the highest levels. Pupils were confident in offering a variety of interpretations and showed respect for each other's views.
- Teachers plan carefully to support disadvantaged pupils but not all teachers carry out all of this planning in lessons.
- There is a programme of structured support in Year 9 to develop pupils' reading skills. Teaching assistants listen to pupils read, correct pronunciation and challenge interpretation. Pupils appreciate book recommendations from staff which are tailored to their interests.
- In many lessons, pupils are encouraged to develop their speaking skills; this was particularly evident in French and drama.
- The school reports to parents on the progress and attainment of pupils three times a year. Leaders have confidence in teachers' predictions. A local authority adviser has checked the school's assessments to confirm that these are accurate.
- A minority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, or sent free texts or emails during the inspection, expressed concern about the frequency of reporting information. They would appreciate updates on their child's progress to be more regular.
- Leaders' focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is having a positive impact on the most able pupils in the school. There are some high levels of challenge for these pupils; for example, some teachers use 'A' level concepts in lessons to raise aspirations. These actions led to an increased number of the highest grades at GCSE in 2017.

- There is effective induction and support for new and existing teachers. Almost all staff who responded to Ofsted's online survey agreed that the school's programme of professional development encourages, challenges and supports them to improve. This has led to an increase in the amount of high quality teaching that pupils receive.
- Leaders have trained teachers, both internally and externally, to be a coach for other teachers. One teacher explained that this has allowed them to reflect on their own practice as well as being a support for their colleagues. Teachers feel that it is a positive experience.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Teachers care about their pupils and have good relationships with them. Form tutors offer support and guidance and allow pupils to voice their opinions in form time. School 'student leaders' raise issues in form time, such as the destination for an end of year school trip. One pupil said that the 'school is better because teachers are more attentive to pupils' needs'.
- Pupils listen carefully to the views of others. In form time, personal, social and health education lessons provide good opportunities for learning about broader topical issues, including fundamental British values, staying healthy and keeping safe using social media.
- Careers guidance has significantly improved, with an increased individual focus which prepares pupils very well for the next step in their education or career. For example, one pupil received considerable guidance and support from external and internal careers advisers and his science teacher, with the result that he is aspiring to a career in medicine. Year 11 pupils speak very positively about the careers guidance and feel their personal careers 'yellow folder' is 'very useful' and helps them make decisions on post-16 study. The number of pupils who leave school without a sustained destination in education, employment or training is very low.
- The assembly programme provides a framework to promote the school's values. Form tutors follow up these assemblies in form time.
- Precise strategies are in place to support pupils' welfare. Form tutors and year leaders work closely together and the school has appointed a school counsellor to work with the school's 'well-being centre'. Pupils speak positively about the centre. They say it supports pupils to reconcile their difficulties.
- Pupils are very positive about the school's support for their personal well-being. One pupil said, 'There are always people to help you at this school'.
- A very small minority of parents who sent free texts during the inspection, or responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, expressed some concerns about bullying in the school. Inspectors spoke to pupils across all year groups who understand what bullying is but say that it is very rare. They do not worry about bullying and say they know what to do and who to speak to. They are confident that

any bullying is resolved swiftly and effectively.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders have implemented strategies to secure improved behaviour. There has been staff training on behaviour for learning and specific training for form tutors. Pupils think that the rules are firmer and are upheld by teachers. The impact of this consistent approach is improved behaviour in and out of the classroom.
- Pupils are self-managing as they move around the school site. They are inclusive: different ages, genders and backgrounds mix happily. In the corridors, there is a calm and controlled pace of movement. Pupils enjoy the indoor and outdoor social spaces which are freely available to them, and behave appropriately.
- Pupils report that transition to Wootton Upper School was a positive experience.
- Pupils' positive attitudes to learning support the progress they make across the school. For example, most pupils move quickly and sensibly to their lessons so that they are ready to learn. Pupils' behaviour in assembly is good. They are quiet and respectful.
- Pupils are aware that teaching has improved. They feel that teachers are 'much better' at providing work for different abilities and say, 'we have some amazing teachers'. In lessons, pupils behave well and do not interrupt the learning of others.
- Pupils are offered leadership opportunities to work with the local community, in sports, teaching and learning and within the 'school parliament'. Some pupils have been involved in improving and promoting the 'student centre'.
- A number of pupils travel by bus to school from surrounding villages. A discreet staff presence supports pupils' well-ordered and self-regulating behaviour on arrival. Clear systems underpin good behaviour in and out of lessons. Pupils are usually polite.
- The vast majority of parents and carers who sent free texts during the inspection, or responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that the school makes sure that pupils are well behaved.
- Pupils are clear that the school does not tolerate any bad language or discriminatory behaviour. Pupils are certain that respect is shown to others who have a different background or outlook on life to their own and believe that everyone is treated equally.
- Leaders keep a close eye on the attendance of all groups of pupils. Attendance has been low for the past two years. It is a greatly improving picture for Year 9, whose current attendance is well above national expectations. In Year 10, attendance is also improving. Leaders' actions are being targeted at improving the attendance in Year 11.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Good

- The school's assessment records and pupils' work indicate that pupils join the school in Year 9 with standards that are average for their age.
- Leaders have brought about important improvements in pupils' achievement so that



pupils are now making better progress and attainment in almost all subjects, including maths and science. Progress and attainment are particularly strong in English.

- In English, attainment is improving rapidly: 89% of pupils achieved a pass at grades 9–4 at GCSE and over 40 pupils achieved a grade 9.
- In 2017, although progress in mathematics was above national expectations, progress in English was significantly above national expectations. Leaders have improved staffing in mathematics to address this difference.
- The progress made in science at key stage 4 is significantly above national expectations. There have been improvements in staffing and in the number of lessons taught, which has helped pupils to gain a greater understanding and enthusiasm for science. As a result, pupils are making better progress.
- In humanities and languages subjects, pupils achieve slightly above national expectations. Scrutiny of pupils' work, the school's assessment records and observation of lessons confirm that pupils are making progress in these subjects.
- In some optional subjects, pupils' attainment is lower than national expectations. A number of subjects did not perform as expected in 2017 and leaders are taking decisive action to address this.
- Leaders have taken the decision that pupils should take meaningful options, linked to career aspirations. The curriculum offer is being refined further to ensure that individual pupils choose courses in which they can achieve more highly.
- Pupils have challenging targets, linked to prior attainment, with some pupils also having aspirational targets set by subject leaders. Leaders have confidence in these predictions, which were accurate against the 2017 results.
- Assessment information shared with inspectors, examination coursework results, and scrutiny of pupils' work all show that most pupils who are currently on roll in key stages 3 and 4 are making expected or better progress from their starting points. Pastoral leaders and subject leaders track achievement closely to identify any underachievement and put support strategies in place quickly.
- The achievement of the most able pupils has improved, owing to effective teaching. These pupils are doing as well as their peers nationally. In 2017, an increased number of pupils achieved the highest grades. Inspectors observed some lessons, such as English, history, science and mathematics, where the most able, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, were challenged to extend their understanding, skills and knowledge. This was not consistent in all subject areas.
- Attainment for disadvantaged pupils is similar to other disadvantaged pupils nationally, although in English, the progress of disadvantaged pupils is above national expectations. In mathematics and science, disadvantaged pupils have made progress from their different starting points, but their attainment is lower than other pupils nationally and within the school. Leaders are focusing on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils so they match their non-disadvantaged peers more closely.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive personalised support to ensure that they make progress across the curriculum. For example, pupils receive targeted one-to-one support and additional resources, carefully targeted to

support their needs. Careful tracking by leaders shows that the progress of current pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with national expectations.

- The school offers a range of opportunities for careers education, which begins in Year 8 in pupils' feeder schools. Pupils in Year 9 take further options at GCSE. Leaders ensure that pupils choose suitable courses which match their interests and career ambitions. As a result, they achieve well and are well prepared for future college courses, work or further training. Pupils value the high-quality impartial advice they receive when selecting their GCSEs. They are also clear about their future destinations when they reach the end of Year 11. Most go on to the academy trust's sixth form but some choose vocational courses elsewhere or apprenticeships. Consequently, the school's destination information is positive.

## School details

Unique reference number	137522
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10040178

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	13 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	904
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr Simon O'Toole
Executive Principal	Mr Michael Gleeson
Telephone number	01234767123
Website	<a href="http://www.wootton.beds.sch.uk">www.wootton.beds.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:wootton@wootton.beds.sch.uk">wootton@wootton.beds.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	8 December 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 part of Wootton Academy Trust.
- The school is an upper school (years 9–11), serving Wootton, Bedfordshire and surrounding areas.
- 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 who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below

average.

- The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which sets the minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 51 lessons. Ten of these lessons were joint observations with school leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, newly qualified teachers, a representative from the local authority, five governors and the chair of the trust.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils of different ages individually and in groups and heard pupils read.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, spending reviews and plans, behaviour and attendance records, and minutes of governing body meetings. They also looked at a review of the school's performance undertaken by the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's single central record of recruitment checks.
- Inspectors considered 171 responses to Parent View, two emails from parents and 83 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Kathryn Herlock, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Carole Herman	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Smith	Ofsted Inspector
John Constable	Ofsted Inspector

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