

# Etonbury Academy

Stotfold Road, Arlesey, Bedfordshire SG15 6XS

## Inspection dates

16–17 November 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have an overgenerous view of the quality of the provision in the school. Their plans do not sufficiently address the key priorities for improvement.
- Leaders and governors have not used the additional funding that they receive for disadvantaged pupils with enough precision to raise standards consistently for those pupils.
- Pupils across the school do not make consistently good progress from their various starting points. In 2017, pupils' progress in writing was significantly below the national average.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not good enough across the curriculum. Pupils' experiences in mathematics and science are too variable.
- Teachers' expectations of the most able pupils are not high enough across the curriculum. The work that teachers plan does not consistently take account of what the pupils already know and understand.
- The assessment procedures that leaders use do not enable them to effectively track and monitor pupils' progress.
- Attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has been lower than national for three academic years. The proportion of these pupils who have been persistently absent has also been too high. Leaders' actions are beginning to take effect with some improvements seen in 2017.

### The school has the following strengths

- Behaviour is good. Pupils value their education as the result of the school's caring ethos.
- The imaginative curriculum has been well planned across all key stages. Pupils' needs and aspirations come first when deciding on their provision.
- Plans to improve pupils' reading have been highly effective in key stages 2 and 3.
- Year 7 pupils who need to catch up are being well supported to develop their literacy skills.
- Most parents are very positive about the school and value the high quality of its pastoral care.
- Support from the trust has been effective in facilitating some improvements to pupils' progress.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that all leaders and governors:
  - plan more carefully to address the school’s key improvement priorities
  - use assessment information for groups of pupils more sharply to support them to make better progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that outcomes are good for all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and the most able, by:
  - ensuring that pupils have regular opportunities to develop and improve their writing skills
  - using the best practice that exists in the school to ensure that teachers plan lessons to meet the learning needs of all pupils, most notably in mathematics and science
  - providing teachers with more-focused training to increase their effectiveness.
- Improve attendance and reduce the persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities by:
  - adding further rigour to the ways leaders monitor pupils’ attendance
  - continuing to work with relevant agencies and parents to ensure that more of these pupils attend regularly.

An external review of the school’s use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to ascertain how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have managed substantial change as Etonbury Academy has been transformed from a middle school into an extended secondary school. Pupil numbers have more than doubled. The building of new facilities and the level of staffing have increased significantly. As the school has grown, however, leaders have not adapted procedures to monitor effectively the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, or to hold teachers to account for pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders have put procedures in place to review the impact of their actions, but they have an overly positive and imprecise view about the quality of provision provided by the school.
- Senior leaders have not ensured that the school's assessment information is used effectively to identify and act swiftly upon the underperformance of pupils. As a result, some leaders do not know how much impact their actions are having on raising pupils' achievement. Leaders do not know precisely enough how groups of pupils are progressing from their various starting points, most notably in key stages 3 and 4.
- Leaders have introduced a 'flightpath' system for pupils from Year 7 upwards that links pupils' progress to GCSE outcomes at the end of Year 11. Most pupils, however, are unsure what grade they are expected to achieve and how well they are doing at the moment.
- Leaders have planned additional intervention for disadvantaged pupils, including revision classes in preparation for key stage 2 national curriculum assessments. While these interventions have made some difference to the achievement of this group of pupils, they have not secured rapid enough progress. Leaders have not acted swiftly enough to evaluate and adapt their provision for disadvantaged pupils.
- Senior leaders have effectively redesigned the provision for pupils in key stage 2 so that pupils experience a smoother transition from lower school. The principal has also secured the agreement of local feeder schools to use the same method of assessing pupils so that these transition arrangements are more effective.
- Leaders have worked creatively to ensure that the school is fully staffed despite the significant challenges they face in recruiting staff locally.
- The curriculum is imaginative and coherent. The thematic approach at key stage 2, and regular 'Wow!' weeks, have a positive impact on pupils' progress. The curriculum is well planned by teachers working together in their year teams and links new learning across many subjects to a common topic. In Year 6, for example, pupils were analysing the language used in the story of Alice in Wonderland in their English lessons and then solving mathematical problems based on its characters. Inspectors observed how these learning activities engaged pupils' interest and enabled them to make measurable progress.
- At key stage 4, some pupils access a wide range of subjects, including creative and vocational options such as animal care, which makes use of the school's farm. Teachers guide them well to make the most appropriate choices. Pupils and parents are full of praise for the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities that are available

to pupils.

- The vast majority of parents and pupils were positive about the improvements in the school, in particular the management of the extensive building programme and the quality of the school's facilities.
- Leaders are now managing the performance of teachers more effectively, and this is raising expectations about what pupils should be achieving in their lessons. However, leaders have not fully implemented a clear framework to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school, particularly at key stage 4.
- Leaders responsible for the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities ensure that these pupils are identified and that their needs are reviewed effectively.
- Leaders' actions to support those in Year 7 who need to catch up with their reading and writing are effective. The additional funding is being used to support additional reading programmes and one-to-one support. School information and pupils' work show that these pupils are making strong progress.
- Similarly, the physical education (PE) and sport premium funding is used effectively to drive up standards in PE and ensure that children enjoy the subject and achieve well. The school has invested in extensive, modern sports facilities and the number of pupils participating in competitive sport is increasing.
- Subject leaders are passionate advocates for their pupils and feel well supported by senior leaders. They see themselves very much as part of 'Team Etonbury'. They share a clear vision for the curriculum and its development across the three key stages. They deploy subject specialists effectively in earlier years to support pupils' progress in core and foundation subjects. However, their monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment across their subject areas currently lacks rigour.
- Support from the Bedfordshire Schools Trust has been strengthened recently. Its advisers have helped to secure greater consistency in tracking the progress made by pupils and to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. There are plans to provide governors with extra capacity.

### **Governance of the school**

- In some respects, governors present challenge and appropriate support to the principal and his senior team. They have not, however, provided sufficient scrutiny of the plans that leaders have developed to improve the quality of provision. They are overly reliant on information provided by leaders about pupils' achievement against national standards. On occasion, they take the attainment information presented at face value, rather than questioning what it shows about the progress of pupils, including different groups of pupils, from their various starting points.
- Governors review the spending of the additional funding that they receive for disadvantaged pupils. However, governors do not challenge leaders sharply enough on how this is ensuring that these pupils make rapid progress to attain in line with other pupils nationally.
- Governors are passionate and committed and take their responsibilities seriously. The governor with responsibility for health and safety, for instance, has undertaken site checks with the principal during the building works. Governors have also established a

clear picture of parents' views about the quality of the provision.

- Governors understand their statutory obligations regarding safeguarding. The nominated safeguarding governor's work to monitor the single central record of the recruitment checks made on staff, and his review of the safeguarding systems, are thorough.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that they undertake all statutory checks when recruiting staff, and they record and maintain the single central record of these checks well. This system is routinely checked by the link safeguarding governor.
- Pupils say they feel confident about their personal safety, particularly keeping themselves safe online. They have faith in the school staff to support them should problems arise.
- Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained in the most up-to-date guidance on child protection and safeguarding. This includes training in the 'Prevent' duty, which supports pupils who are vulnerable to radicalisation and extremism. Staff are aware of the signs of potential abuse, neglect or concern, and make appropriate referrals to the designated safeguarding team.
- The designated safeguarding team is dedicated to the well-being and care of the most vulnerable pupils. It acts to ensure that these pupils get access to the right care and support, both from within the school and from external agencies. Leaders identify that social, emotional and mental health is becoming an increasing issue for many of their pupils and are considering their provision to ensure that they are providing the most up-to-date support for these pupils.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Not all teachers plan learning effectively. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not securing good progress consistently for pupils across all year groups and across the curriculum.
- Leaders know where the strengths lie in teaching, learning and assessment. However, they are overgenerous in their view about the impact of teaching overall on pupils' learning across the curriculum. This is because their procedures for monitoring teaching are not strong enough.
- Some teachers do not have expectations that are high enough and their planning does not take enough account of what pupils already know and can do. They set the same work for all pupils without taking their learning needs into account, and many pupils then find activities too easy or too difficult.
- While the support given to lower-ability pupils is increasingly more effective, the strategies teachers use do not stretch and challenge the most able and some disadvantaged pupils. As a result, these groups of pupils, particularly the most able, make less progress than they otherwise could.
- Pupils have the opportunity to develop their writing skills in different subjects but these

opportunities have not been embedded across the curriculum. Pupils are not expected regularly enough to write at length and in detail.

- Sometimes, teachers ask pupils to assess each other's work. When this is well planned, it enables pupils to develop their writing skills and they make progress. Often, though, teachers do not explain effectively what they expect pupils to do. This means that the mistakes pupils have made are compounded and their progress is limited.
- Feedback to pupils varies considerably in its impact because teachers do not follow the school's policy consistently enough. When it is used most effectively, pupils understand clearly what they need to do to improve their work. In a Year 9 French lesson, for example, the teacher's use of feedback led to a rapid improvement in pupils' learning. In other lessons, however, the feedback is not specific enough, which means that pupils make slower progress. Occasionally, teachers do not make it clear enough what they expect pupils to learn during their lessons.
- Provision is strong in the creative arts, including art and drama, and languages. The provision in mathematics and science is more variable. Where teaching is most effective, teachers have a thorough understanding of their subjects. They use this to plan appropriately for pupils' learning over time, and to question them effectively, so that pupils deepen their understanding, apply new skills and make the progress of which they are capable. A Year 8 art project on shanty towns, for instance, not only stretched pupils' artistic abilities, but also made them reflect more deeply on issues of equality and fairness in the modern world.
- From their scrutiny of books, inspectors could see that most pupils take great pride in their work.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are well-mannered, articulate and express themselves confidently. They hold doors open, are willing to help one another and are thoughtful about the needs of their peers. During the inspection, many pupils were involved in fund-raising activities for the charity Children in Need.
- Many pupils and parents praise the quality of pastoral care provided at the school. 'The staff at Etonbury have gone above and beyond' is representative of parental comments. The vast majority of parents say that their children feel safe and are well looked after in school. This is because the school's pastoral team works effectively to create an inclusive and positive learning environment. They deal quickly with any behaviour issues that do arise and make clear that they expect students to conduct themselves sensibly and maturely.
- Leaders ensure that the school values, such as humility and honesty, feature as a part of daily life. Pupils hear about these values in assembly and talk positively about the assembly programme and what they have learned. Pupils are punctual to school and take full advantage of the extensive range of after-school activities, which they value greatly.

- The support, care and guidance for children looked after are strong. The designated teacher and his team routinely review pupils' attendance, behaviour and well-being. Leaders work well with external partners, carers and agencies to ensure that the needs of these pupils are being met both in and out of school.
- Pupils in key stage 2 remain in their own dedicated form rooms for most lessons in the Etonbury Juniors primary unit. This provision has been carefully and effectively planned to make the transition from lower school to a secondary school environment less daunting for pupils and their parents.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school routinely celebrates pupils' achievements and pupils' work is on display in all areas of the school. The site is maintained well, litter is rare, classrooms are tidy and there is no graffiti. This is all the more commendable in view of the extensive and ongoing building work that is being undertaken. The school is a vibrant place that welcomes pupils through its doors.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are characterised by mutual respect. Since the previous inspection, leaders have taken decisive and successful action to improve standards of behaviour. This is amply demonstrated by the fact that teachers and other staff now trust pupils to have free access to most areas of the school at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Pupils understand the high standards of behaviour that are expected of them and say the behaviour system works. Lessons are calm and pupils engage purposefully with their learning. They work in harmony together, supporting one another when tackling something tricky. Most parents and pupils consider that behaviour at the school is good.
- Pupils enjoy school and feel well supported. They say bullying is rare and that concerns of that kind are dealt with rapidly and effectively by staff.
- Overall attendance is improving. Leaders have made concerted efforts to address this by challenging and supporting those families where attendance is an issue. However, the attendance of some groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, has remained low for the past three academic years. The school information suggests this is starting to improve and there were some improvements in attendance in the school's provisional information for 2017.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Pupils start in Year 5 at Etonbury, having typically completed the first two years of key stage 2 in a local lower school. They then sit key stage 2 tests at the end of Year 6.
- In 2016, the progress made by pupils in key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics was below average.
- In 2017, this improved and most pupils made stronger progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their starting points. Pupils made progress in reading and mathematics that was broadly in line with the national average. Although pupils also

made progress in their writing, this remained below the national average for that year.

- Pupils' attainment improved significantly in 2017 compared to the previous year. The proportion of pupils that achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was above average. However, the proportion that achieved the higher standard was below average.
- The most able pupils made slower progress in mathematics and writing. Leaders have failed to address sufficiently the significant underperformance of this group of pupils because they have not monitored their progress systematically. Teachers are unaware of how highly these pupils could achieve, and do not consistently set work which requires them to excel.
- Pupils read widely and often. They have a love of reading which is evident through their fluent reading and comprehension skills.
- The attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 in reading and mathematics was well below that of other pupils nationally in 2017. Their attainment in writing was above average. They made progress in reading, writing and mathematics that was average, and this represented a significant improvement on 2016. Early indications suggest that, currently, this group of pupils is maintaining this improvement in English and mathematics.
- Pupils in all years who have SEN and/or disabilities are now supported more effectively. Their progress is being monitored well by leaders, who have introduced personal provision plans for each of these pupils. Teaching assistants support these pupils highly effectively in class and pupils are consequently making improved progress.
- Leaders, with support from the trust, have recently introduced new procedures to track and record the progress that pupils make in key stage 2. Leaders reviewed the most recent assessment information with inspectors. The indications are that pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 are now making stronger progress.
- Leaders do not systematically review the progress being made by pupils and different groups of pupils in key stages 3 and 4. Although they have recently collected assessment information for all pupils, leaders have not yet analysed it in detail. Scrutiny of the assessment information by inspectors indicates that pupils make stronger progress in key stage 3 than in key stage 4, with particular strengths in art, design and technology, and drama. Pupils' progress in mathematics is stronger in Year 9. Their progress in English is stronger in Year 10.



## School details

Unique reference number	137632
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10036249

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 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	931
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Sarah Bygrave
Principal	Alex Prior
Telephone number	01462 730391
Website	<a href="http://www.etonbury.org.uk/">www.etonbury.org.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@bemat.org.uk">office@bemat.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	11–12 October 2012

## 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 opened as an academy in November 2011 when it joined the Bedfordshire East Multi-Academy Trust (BEMAT). BEMAT has now been renamed Bedfordshire Schools Trust (BEST) and a new chief executive officer was appointed in 2016.
- The school is undergoing significant building development. It was previously a middle school for pupils in Years 5 to 8. It became an extended secondary school in September 2016 for pupils between the ages of nine to 16 years. There are currently pupils on roll from Years 5 to 10.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding is significantly below the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is significantly below the national average.
- Pupils typically enter the school with attainment that is significantly higher than expected for their age.
- The school met the floor standards set by the Department for Education for the achievement of pupils in 2016.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 2 academic results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 44 lessons to observe teaching and learning across the school in both the core and the foundation subjects. A number of these observations were undertaken jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with the principal, senior leaders and middle leaders. Inspectors also met with the chief executive officer for the Bedfordshire Schools Trust, trust advisers, and governors from the local governing body.
- Inspectors scrutinised work from across different key stages, including in English, mathematics, science, history, geography and modern languages.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, development plan, minutes of governors' meetings, safeguarding records, files belonging to children looked after, pupils' progress information, and school policies and procedures.
- Inspectors analysed 264 responses from Ofsted's online survey of parents, Parent View, including free-text commentary provided by some parents. The lead inspector also held a telephone conversation with one parent.
- Inspectors reviewed the responses from 49 pupils to Ofsted's online survey. They spoke informally to pupils at breaktimes, at lunchtimes and in lessons, and also met formally with pupils to discuss their experiences. Inspectors also listened to pupils in Years 6 and 7 read.

## Inspection team

Peter Whear, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Ceri Evans	Ofsted Inspector
David Piercy	Ofsted Inspector
Donna Young	Ofsted Inspector

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