

St Augustine's Academy

Oakwood Avenue, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU5 4AS

Inspection dates

12–13 June 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The new headteacher has provided strong and effective leadership. Her high expectations of staff and pupils have resulted in a determined and passionate culture to raise standards.
- The headteacher is supported well by the newly appointed and experienced deputy headteacher. She has had a positive impact on her areas of responsibility, including the curriculum and early years. Other leaders are new to their posts and consequently their impact varies.
- Training and guidance for staff are effective in holding all staff to account for the progress and outcomes of pupils. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving.
- The governing body works effectively in partnership with senior leaders to monitor and improve the provision. They ask challenging questions of leaders and support the improvements made in the school through monitoring and feedback.
- A new assessment system ensures that teachers assess pupils accurately. This is enabling teachers to better understand what pupils know and can do.
- Self-evaluation of the school is accurate because leaders seek a range of views to assess how the school is doing and what it needs to do next.
- Pupils' behaviour has improved under the new leadership team. Exclusions have reduced. Pupils are now supported well in managing their behaviour.
- The early years is strong. Children are acquiring basic skills effectively. This is because leaders and teachers have set clear expectations of what they need to achieve.
- While teaching and learning are generally good, there is still more to do to ensure that teaching in all subjects and year groups promotes the best possible outcomes.
- Pupils' attendance, including that of disadvantaged pupils, is improving. However, the attendance of a number of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is not yet good.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact of middle leaders new to post by providing appropriate training so that they can have a greater influence in developing the school.
- Improve outcomes so that they are consistently good across all key stages and in all subjects by:
 - establishing consistent expectations across the school of how pupils should present their work
 - ensuring that pupils have opportunities to develop their reading, writing and mathematics skills and their vocabulary across subjects.
- Improve attendance by ensuring that leaders track and support the attendance of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Improve the monitoring of the impact of the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced significant changes. These include having its first Year 6 class as a primary school. It has also been through a period of uncertainty that has affected the impact of leadership over time.
- The new headteacher has had a positive impact on the school. This is because of her determination that all pupils must receive a good education. Since taking up her post at the beginning of this academic year, she has rigorously reviewed every aspect of the school. As a result, she and the newly appointed deputy headteacher have a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Determined and focused leadership has reversed the three-year decline in outcomes for pupils. Pupils now make better progress than in the past.
- Leaders have rightly focused on improving the quality of teaching. As a result, it is improving rapidly. Rigorous monitoring of teaching and the training of staff have resulted in a sense of urgency to improve further. Teachers are beginning to share best practice with each other and this is having a positive impact.
- Staff value the professional development they receive. Those who responded to the inspection survey said that they feel able to try new approaches in their teaching and that they are well supported in their job. They also say that they enjoy working in the school and that the school has improved since the previous inspection.
- Leaders are open about their work and welcome challenge. They seek feedback from a variety of sources including Central Bedfordshire local authority, the Diocese of St Albans and an external consultant. As a result, self-evaluation is accurate and improvement planning is thorough and focused on improving teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- The curriculum has been reviewed and now includes more appropriate content. Pupils have a broad range of experiences and learning. The curriculum contributes positively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, the work that pupils are doing on 'self' is evident in pupils' behaviour, self-esteem and relationships with others. During a football match at lunchtime, both girls and boys played well together and pupils apologised to each other when they accidentally bumped into somebody. This behaviour is typical. Parents, carers and pupils agree that behaviour is good.
- Pupils study a range of historical figures; they learn about a range of countries in geography. This is supplemented by 'special days' and the 'scarecrow wardrobe' that is changed regularly to fit in with national or international events, such as Suffragettes' Day, the World Cup and the Royal Wedding. This varied range of experiences aids pupils' understanding of the wider world.
- Leaders provide rewards for pupils who demonstrate the values of the school. These include fundamental British values, such as 'respect' and 'following rules'. They have created a culture where all do their best. The curriculum supports the inclusion of all pupils and pupils are accepting of each other's differences. This was evident when pupils said it was acceptable for pupils to wear different clothes, including boys

wearing skirts. This acceptance can be seen in the positive relationships across the school.

- School leaders spend additional funds appropriately, including the physical education and sport premium, which has improved the teaching of physical education and pupils' increased participation in a range of sporting activities. However, the closure of the local swimming pool has made it harder for pupils to swim 25 metres by the end of Year 6.
- The leader of special educational needs and disabilities is improving provision well. However, the impact of this provision is not monitored rigorously for its impact.
- Pupil premium funding is spent well and targeted upon promoting attendance and strengthening pupils' progress. There is an appropriate focus on consistently improving the quality of teaching. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are making good progress and their attendance is improving at a faster rate than that of other pupils.
- Middle leaders new to post are in the early stages of their development and, as a result, have inconsistent knowledge of the impact of their work in the areas that they lead. Senior leaders have identified training needs for subject leaders.
- While attendance has improved significantly and persistent absence is reducing, attendance information is not analysed as well as it could be. Some groups of vulnerable pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, do not attend often enough.

Governance of the school

- Governors have led the school through several years of turbulence and change. They have been instrumental in establishing the current leadership team and are clear what further improvements are required.
- The reports provided by leaders to governors are clear and comprehensive. This assists governors' work in making decisions about where resources should be targeted.
- Governors' chosen method of monitoring progress in the school includes regular visits and weekly meetings between the chair of governors and the headteacher. This works well for them. Governors do not shy away from having open and honest conversations.
- The systems and processes that governors have established are effective. The information that they receive allows them to challenge and support the school to make further improvements.
- There is a strong and committed partnership between school staff and governors, which has resulted in a sense of purpose and direction. For example, governors have focused some of their work on checking how well pupils are responding to the new behaviour policy.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- New school leaders quickly addressed previous gaps in the single central record of pre-employment checks for staff and are rigorous in maintaining it. It is now up to date

and accurate. The systems which are used to ensure that all staff who work with pupils are safe to do so are thorough and effectively monitored.

- The school has a significant number of vulnerable pupils, whom staff know well and care for. There are also a significant number of pupils who join or leave during the year. The school has effective systems for ensuring that pupils are not taken off roll before starting at another school. This ensures that all pupils are safe during these times of change.
- Leaders are persistent in seeking additional support from external agencies when pupils need it. This has resulted in families and pupils being able to access essential services such as housing and social services support.
- The school's family support worker provides good early help for families and pupils in need of intervention. She is well trained and provides safeguarding training for other staff. She knows the community well and provides early morning 'drop in' support for parents. This helps the school in being alert quickly to family issues that may impact on pupils' learning.
- Case notes for pupils in need of help are rigorous and detailed and show actions taken to follow up concerns. These include a range of in-school services and referrals to other agencies.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Current leaders inherited a school with poor outcomes. However, decisive action has been taken to turn this around. Where staff have fallen short of expectations, swift action has been taken to address this.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and say that teachers make it fun for them so that they want to come to school. One parent said: 'The new leadership team has made a huge difference; attitudes to learning have improved and so has behaviour. The school is interested in what parents have to say.' Parents who inspectors spoke to said the standard of teaching was much higher now than previously.
- Teachers are clear about what pupils should learn. In science, pupils develop more knowledge of key topics over time. For example, in Year 4 pupils learn how changes in the environment affect living things. By Year 6, they can write at length about Darwin and evolution.
- Assessment is accurate and pupils' progress is reviewed regularly. This helps the school ensure that interventions are appropriate and that teaching is well matched to pupils' starting points.
- Pupils read regularly in school and at home; they say that they enjoy reading. Teachers plan opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in reading and writing across the curriculum. For example, pupils read about the Second World War before they wrote letters as evacuees. However, pupils do not consistently have opportunities to apply their basic skills and extend their vocabulary in all subjects or year groups.
- In music and physical education, the good subject knowledge of the teachers ensures that teaching is effective because good questions are asked which make pupils think. Pupils are also taught to use the correct words when answering questions or talking to

their classmates. For example, pupils were encouraged to use words such as 'pitch' and 'beat' in music and 'wide', 'narrow' and 'curved' in physical education.

- In mathematics, teachers are helping pupils fill gaps in their knowledge from previous poor teaching. Pupils work through skills tests independently and confidently. They ensure that key concepts and knowledge are revised and not forgotten. As a result, pupils are becoming more confident and independent in applying the skills that they learn.
- Pupils receive effective guidance in lessons to improve not only their behaviour but also their basic skills. Adults provide individual, whole-class and group support.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' presentation of their work are not yet consistently high. As a result, some pupils do not take as much pride as they should in their handwriting or care over their diagrams and drawings.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are well supported in their learning and make good progress. This is because they are fully included in all teaching and they have high-quality resources to support their learning. They also receive guidance on their work so that they know how to improve.

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 happy in school and say that they feel safe. Leaders log any inappropriate discriminatory language and deal with it appropriately. Pupils feel well looked after and say there are adults that they can talk to if they are concerned about anything. Pupils also enjoy the opportunity to discuss key values with visitors, such as local magistrates.
- Pupils believe that there is a 'St Augustine's way' which has golden rules, rewards and consequences. These are displayed around school and pupils are reminded of them in lessons. Pupils respect these and, as a result, behave well.
- The school has built positive links with the local pre-school, food banks, the local church, the local community and parents. The local team vicar takes assemblies and members of the community run the very popular gardening club. Pupils work with a variety of different people. These opportunities contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils take pride in their appearance and all pupils wear the correct uniform.
- The 'self' project is developing pupils' awareness of themselves, helping them reflect on their behaviour and relationships, and building their self-esteem. This is seen in classes, where elements of pupils' uniqueness are shared or their successes celebrated. Pupils are proud to receive the weekly 'self' rewards which appear in the newsletter each week. Pupils are being well supported to be independent learners.
- Pupils talk confidently about how they stay safe online and how visits from the police have helped them understand the dangers of giving out personal details.
- Pupils focus well on their learning and listen to teachers and other adults. Expectations

of behaviour are reinforced throughout lessons. Learning is rarely interrupted by poor behaviour.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. During lessons, when arriving in school and during playtimes and lunchtimes, pupils treat each other with respect. They listen and move around school calmly and sensibly.
- Pupils focus well on their learning and listen to teachers and other adults. Expectations of behaviour are reinforced throughout lessons. Learning is rarely interrupted by poor behaviour.
- As a result of the good support that pupils receive, their behaviour is improving over time and exclusions have reduced significantly. Persistent absence is also improving. Attendance targets form part of all early-help plans for pupils who need additional support.
- Pupils are polite and courteous. This is because adults model good manners and relationships.
- Parents agree that behaviour is good and say that any issues that arise between pupils are sorted out quickly.
- Historically, attendance has been low and persistent absence has been high. So far this year, pupils' overall attendance has improved significantly, including that of disadvantaged pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes have been low and declining for three years. At the end of the early years in 2017, the proportion of pupils reaching a good level of development was very low. At key stage 2 in 2016 and 2017, pupils' progress was in the bottom 20% nationally for all pupils for reading, writing and mathematics. Only half of the pupils eligible met the phonics standard at the end of Year 1. Progress and attainment are improving quickly but still have some way to go to ensure that all groups of pupils do as well as they should.
- Leaders have developed systems which effectively track the progress pupils make. This means they are now able to identify the pupils who are, and are not, making good progress. This includes the high number of pupils who join the school mid-year. In the past, leaders have not managed this mobility well but effective systems are now in place to monitor the changes in each year group. Teacher assessment is now accurate and used well to meet pupils' needs.
- Leaders have developed a culture of urgency which results in effective support for pupils who fall behind. As a result, many pupils are catching up quickly, including disadvantaged pupils. The proportion of pupils currently in the school who are on track to achieve what is expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics is increasing as pupils move to the next year group.

- This year, the attainment of pupils is nearer to age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics in all key stages. For example, the outcomes in Year 1 in phonics are 40% better than this cohort of pupils achieved at the end of Reception in 2017. Reading, writing and mathematics outcomes at the end of key stage 1 have also improved significantly. In Year 6 pupils' work and the current assessments demonstrate that the support pupils have received has been very successful. Pupils are meeting higher standards than in previous years.
- The school's assessment information shows that most pupils throughout the school are now making the progress that they should. This is supported by the work in pupils' exercise books, the knowledge pupils demonstrate in discussions and the improved understanding over time seen in their work.
- Support for pupils who need to catch up, including from teaching assistants and senior staff, is effective. In 2017, the gap in outcomes between disadvantaged pupils and others in phonics in key stage 1 reduced by 50% as a result of the additional support provided to pupils. Current progress information demonstrates that there is little variation in outcomes between pupils in the school who are disadvantaged and those who are not. This is because pupils who are disadvantaged are making progress at a faster rate than other pupils.
- There is now a higher emphasis on developing pupils' vocabulary across the curriculum. Inspectors saw reading lessons which focused on the use of language well. Pupils who read to inspectors showed the good progress they had made, both in reading their individual reading books and their own and others' work. For example, pupils who did not meet the phonics assessment standard in Year 1 were able to read sounds and words that met the standard in Year 2. Some higher-attaining pupils were able to explain the meaning of key and unusual words in their reading such as 'menacingly'. However, not all pupils are confident in knowing how to find out what unusual words mean and a small number have reading books that were too difficult or too easy for them.
- The progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is good. Pupils have effective provision plans and learning is adapted for them in class.
- The school has focused its time and resources on improving outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils make better progress in these areas of the curriculum. However, pupils do not always apply the skills that they learn in these areas of the curriculum to other subjects. As a result of this, progress in other curriculum subjects is not yet consistently good.

Early years provision

Good

- Children are making good progress as a result of the effective teaching that they receive. Leaders have refocused teaching on the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and mathematics. This is because they have a clear understanding of the barriers that children face and the urgency needed to enable children to be well prepared for Year 1.
- Individual children and their families are involved in supporting their learning through homework and also in providing resources. For example, individual children's heritage

is celebrated and shared with others through 'European day', when some parents share their specific cultures with the class and school.

- Expectations of what children can achieve in the early years have been raised by leaders. Despite children's often low starting points, they are catching up quickly. More children have achieved a good level of development this year than in previous years. While still below national average, the numbers achieving this important benchmark are rising rapidly. Leaders' effective tracking of individual children is having a positive impact on children's progress because teachers can intervene quickly where children are not making the progress that the school expects.
- Phonics is taught effectively and children make good progress. Clear expectations of the outcomes at each stage of the year are in place so that staff know where children should be and can help them catch up if they fall behind.
- Leadership is effective because leaders know pupils well and understand their individual needs. The school has strong links with the local pre-school. This has resulted in better transition processes and more opportunities for children and their parents to visit school.
- The curriculum is effective and takes into account the context of the children, including those who do not get opportunities to play outside regularly. For example, pupils have regular 'forest school' sessions, which allow them access to play spaces. They have active, high-quality music sessions where they can dance, sing and listen carefully to the rhythm and pulse of music. These wide curriculum opportunities promote children's listening, well-being and the development of a wider vocabulary.
- Staff are experienced and well trained, including in paediatric first aid, and manage the individual needs of children well. This includes those with additional medical needs and those who require intimate care. Procedures and systems to safeguard children are strong.
- Children are happy and confident and join in well with lessons. They listen to the adults and are developing the characteristics of effective learning well. This is because the learning environment and teaching are effectively planned. Children explore, learn to play with others and use all of the curriculum areas to develop and improve their knowledge.
- The additional funding for disadvantaged children is spent appropriately to support the removal of barriers to learning, including through specific language and physical development programmes. These programmes provide good-quality resources and have a positive impact on the progress of disadvantaged children.
- Children behave well and are happy in school. All adults contribute positively to their well-being and safety. As a result, children feel safe and enjoy their learning.

School details

Unique reference number	138558
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10046075

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Stand-alone Academy
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	163
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Carole Hegley
Headteacher	Amanda Howes
Telephone number	01582 661 778
Website	www.staugustinesacademy.co.uk
Email address	office@staugustinesacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	21–22 October 2014

Information about this school

- The school has undergone significant changes since the last inspection, including changing its status from lower to primary school and having a number of headteachers and staff start and leave.
- Several new governors have been appointed this academic year after a review of the governing body.
- The school does not meet the current government floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well above average.
- School improvement services are commissioned by the school from Central Bedfordshire local authority and a private consultant.
- A large proportion of pupils join and leave the school during the year.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed lessons in all classes. This included a range of reading, writing and mathematics lessons and some lessons in other subject areas.
- They read with 12 pupils and looked at pupils' work books.
- Inspectors spoke to parents as they arrived with their children for school and took account of the 19 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as the nine free-text responses.
- Meetings were held with leaders of the school and governors, and a telephone meeting was held with a representative of the Central Bedfordshire local authority.
- A range of internal and external documents were examined including reports from the Diocese of St Albans, Central Bedfordshire local authority and the external consultant that the school commissions to provide school improvement support.
- Inspectors also looked at the range of governor reports and minutes and reports received by the governing body.
- Inspectors checked the school's single central record of pre-employment checks and other documentation concerned with the safer recruitment of staff and volunteers.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils throughout the school day and met with a small group of pupils formally. They also considered the 16 responses from pupils to the online survey.

Inspection team

Debbie Rogan, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ali Pepper

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