

Bury St Edmunds County Upper School

Beetons Way, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP32 6RF

Inspection dates

16–17 January 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders have failed to take all reasonable steps to ensure pupils' safety. They have not made the required child protection referrals to the correct external agencies when pupils have been at risk. These failures have meant that pupils in unsafe situations have not received timely help to protect them.
- Leaders' communication and liaison with external agencies have not been effective. Poor communication has limited the ability of all concerned to understand the risks that individual pupils face and to work together to minimise these risks.
- Some pupils do not feel safe on the school's site. They are concerned that it is too easy for unauthorised visitors to gain access to the site and buildings without their presence being challenged quickly.
- Governors do not hold leaders to account for standards in different areas of the school's work robustly enough, including the effectiveness of leaders' arrangements to keep pupils safe and secure.
- Governors have an insufficient understanding of the seriousness of local safeguarding risks.

The school has the following strengths

- Inspiring teaching and rigorous assessment promote pupils' progress and attainment exceptionally well. Pupils are equipped to engage in rigorous intellectual enquiry, and in high-level discussion and debate.
- The curriculum successfully enables pupils to make connections between what they have learned within different subjects, which deepens their knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils' enjoyment in adding to their stock of knowledge is abundantly evident. Pupils develop the ability to think logically and deeply. They write persuasively and with clarity.
- Most pupils are rarely absent, behave exceptionally well, are considerate and show respect for all.
- Many pupils take on positions of responsibility that promote their own and others' personal development.
- Almost all pupils engage in an exceptionally wide variety of enrichment activities that develop their interests well and add to the richness of the school's community.
- Excellent provision in the sixth form enables almost all students to gain admission to study at the most selective universities.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Promote the safety of all pupils, including those who are vulnerable and need early help, by ensuring that:
 - all safeguarding practice follows statutory guidance
 - all necessary referrals are made in a timely manner to the relevant external agencies
 - leaders and governors communicate and share information with external agencies, including the local authority, effectively
 - leaders and governors urgently improve the arrangements to keep pupils safe and secure on the school's site.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that governors monitor all aspects of the school's work with appropriate rigour, so that appropriate action is taken to address weaknesses.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders do not follow the correct protocols well enough when sharing information about risks to individual pupils' safety. They have not made child protection referrals in all instances when pupils have been at risk of harm, which means that pupils have not had timely help to keep them safe.
- Relationships between the multi-academy trust's leaders and senior local authority officers are poor. Information is not shared as readily and fully as it should be. Leaders and governors have not responded to the challenge from local authority officers by making all necessary changes to safeguarding arrangements.
- Governors do not have a clear enough understanding about the significance of some local safeguarding risks, and the dangers these pose to pupils, including drug-dealing and gang-related ('county lines') activity. Governors are not doing enough to hold leaders to account for the effectiveness of their work to minimise the potential risks to the school community.
- Leaders have not ensured that levels of site security and supervision are sufficient to prevent unauthorised persons from gaining access to buildings on the school site. Some pupils told inspectors that this has happened both during the inspection and before it. Pupils have also been able to absent themselves from the school site without authorisation.
- Inspectors were made aware that the local police have forwarded third-party concerns about pupils' safety, including the anti-social behaviour of pupils who have been on the school's roll but educated on a part-time basis or at home by the school's staff.
- The curriculum supports pupils' learning well. Pupils study courses that are rigorous, exceptionally well planned and strongly promote pupils' spirit of intellectual enquiry.
- Spiritual, moral and cultural development is exceptionally well supported for most pupils. Pupils have a myriad of opportunities to perform on stage, engage in competitive sport, take part in debating contests or create impressive visual art work. There are over 100 different activities in which pupils can, and do, engage.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They develop a strong understanding of democracy, including through the work of the school council. They demonstrate respect and tolerance for people who have different faiths or lifestyles. Pupils told inspectors that: 'It's safe to be different here. Nobody judges you.'
- The leadership of teaching and learning is highly effective. Staff benefit from ongoing and relevant training, and from the freedom to innovate that senior leaders give them. Staff are highly motivated.
- Subject leaders' long- and medium-term plans for teaching are very well thought through. They provide excellent guidance to teachers. The plans support teachers' short-term planning so that the tasks they set meet the needs of different groups of pupils.
- The headteacher and other leaders know individual pupils well. They ensure that individual pupils' progress is monitored carefully, so that any pupil who falls behind

receives timely support to help them catch up.

- Pupils benefit from a school environment that manages to combine a degree of informality and good humour with a relentless sense of purpose and ambition. Leaders ensure that relationships are positive and are characterised by mutual respect.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding appropriately to remove barriers to learning. This ensures that pupils who are disadvantaged attend and behave well, so that they derive as much benefit from the school's effective teaching as other pupils do. However, leaders' analysis of the impact made by the ways in which they use pupil premium funding lacks depth.

Governance of the school

- Governors are committed to the school, but do not have the information that they need to fully hold leaders to account for each aspect of the school's work.
- Governors analyse information about pupils' performance in public examinations but do not know enough about the overall progress being made by sixth-form students. Neither governors nor leaders have analysed the impact of the school's use of pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils with sufficient rigour. This limits their ability to make well-thought-through decisions about how best to use funding to support current pupils.
- Governors have a limited understanding of the seriousness of local contextual safeguarding risks that potentially face pupils, including 'county lines' drug and gang-related activity. They have not put sufficiently rigorous systems in place to stop potential intruders from accessing the site, or to prevent pupils from leaving it without permission.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- The school's safeguarding policy complies with current statutory guidance, but the policy has not been implemented effectively.
- Leaders have not ensured that child protection referrals have been made whenever pupils have been known to be in unsafe situations. Pupils have not received the necessary support to keep them safe.
- Unauthorised persons have accessed buildings on the school's site without this issue being responded to quickly and effectively enough.
- Although training has ensured that most members of staff know what to do if they have concerns about pupils' welfare, some staff members lack clarity about the processes that they should follow in the event of some types of safeguarding concern. A few members of staff who spoke with inspectors were unclear on who they should report a concern about a fellow colleague's conduct to, or how to respond to pupils if asked to view an inappropriate image sent to their mobile device.
- Leaders ensure that the correct pre-employment checks are made before staff start working at the school.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' understanding of a range of risks, and the ways that

they can minimise them, well.

- Pupils told inspectors that there is always someone that they can talk to at the school if they have a problem and that they feel well supported. Other than the concerns raised by some about those who access the school's grounds and buildings inappropriately, pupils feel safe at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils. They set pupils challenging targets and demanding tasks that are, in the words of one pupil, 'difficult without being too difficult'. Pupils respond with determination and resilience. They try their hardest because they find their work interesting and want to do well, which, almost invariably, they do.
- Pupils benefit from teachers' clarity, at the outset of a task, as to how they can excel when completing it. Teachers plan activities that enable all to move forward in their learning. Teachers check pupils' understanding and adjust their teaching quickly whenever necessary.
- Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to ensure that pupils' understanding goes beyond the demands of assessments or examinations. Teachers show pupils the real-world applications of knowledge, including mathematical and scientific. This helps pupils to clarify their thinking about careers and reinforces their ambition and desire to learn more.
- Teachers use subject-specific words and phrases appropriately and make sure that pupils do so too. This enhances pupils' ability to speak accurately, and in an articulate manner, when they are discussing their learning.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers promote learning well. Pupils benefit from a classroom atmosphere that is often relaxed and informal, which enables them to share ideas freely, make mistakes and explain if they are unsure about something. Teachers identify who needs further help, as well as those who are ready to be challenged further.
- Pupils benefit from regular opportunities to engage in sophisticated classroom discussion and debate. The debates develop pupils' ability to think logically and to assess the strength of evidence for different accounts or arguments. Pupils readily adapt their initial perspectives as they learn more.
- Pupils collaborate well when completing tasks. They listen to each other's contributions respectfully and thoughtfully. Pupils assess accurately the quality of each other's work as well as that of their own. They check and refine their work as they complete it. They readily commit to improving their work.
- Teachers have high expectations of the most able pupils. They use a variety of techniques, including questioning, that require pupils to think hard. In mathematics, for example, questioning helps to develop the depth of pupils' mathematical reasoning and understanding exceptionally well.
- Teachers and support staff support the work of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) very well, so that they typically make at least good progress from their individual starting points. Teachers adapt learning activities and provide

individuals expertly with the help they need, so that pupils can engage well in suitably challenging work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Leaders have not always followed the appropriate safeguarding procedures in respect of individuals' welfare. Although there are exceptionally strong aspects of pupils' personal development, the school has failed to attend adequately to the safety and welfare of all pupils.
- Some pupils told inspectors that they do not feel safe because unauthorised persons have entered the school grounds and buildings. They are also concerned that sometimes pupils leave the school site without permission. This is confirmed by the school's monitoring information.
- The curriculum ensures that pupils receive excellent guidance about risks and how to minimise them.
- Leaders promote pupils' participation in the wider life of the school well. Many pupils take part in the exceptionally rich variety of artistic, dramatic, musical, social and sporting activities available to them.
- Many pupils make an active contribution beyond the immediate school community. They help to support the learning of younger pupils within the trust's other schools and raise significant sums of money for local and national charities. Pupils have raised over £150,000 for charity over the last decade.
- Many pupils contribute to the school community through leadership roles, including by serving as school councillors and as key stage 4 subject ambassadors. Year 9 STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) ambassadors help to run themed days that focus on particular aspects of the curriculum, such as the termly 'science day'.
- Pupils benefit from taking part in a wide variety of trips and visits that deepen their learning. The foreign exchange programme helps pupils to immerse themselves in French and German culture at the same time as they develop their spoken language skills, for example. Historians take their learning to another level by visiting the First World War battlefields.
- Many pupils learn to play a musical instrument. Many play in the school's different ensembles, such as in the string quartet or swing band. Pupils take part in numerous high-level national and international performances.
- Drama is particularly strong. At least two plays are staged at the school during each academic year. Many pupils involve themselves in extra-curricular sport, with over 200 competitive fixtures played during the typical academic year.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of different types of bullying. They are confident that, on the very rare occasions in which it happens, staff deal with it effectively so that it does not continue.

- Through the school's careers programme, pupils gain an excellent understanding of the different options that are open to them and what they will need to do to gain successful entry to further or higher education, training or employment. Pupils benefit from regular contact with employers and access to high-quality, independent careers advice throughout their time at the school.
- Through lessons, assemblies and presentations by visiting speakers, pupils develop a very secure understanding of different risks and how they can minimise these. Pupils spoke knowledgeably to inspectors about how they stay safe online.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very positive, which means that teachers seldom need to use sanctions when responding to the very rare incidences of disruption to learning.
- Serious misbehaviour is an exceptionally rare occurrence. Pastoral leaders review pupils' behaviour daily and offer swift support to any who find it difficult to manage their conduct, including through one-to-one provision in 'the pod'. This helps the school to avoid using the sanctions of temporary or permanent exclusion.
- Pupils complete their work with pride, care and attention to detail. Very often they do more than they need to, and so produce work of very high quality.
- Behaviour around the school's site is exemplary. Pupils move around the site quickly, purposefully and calmly. They socialise companionably during break and lunchtimes.
- Pupils attend well and are punctual. Very few pupils are frequent non-attenders.
- The small number of pupils who attend alternative provision typically attend and behave well.
- Pupils develop a strong understanding of how to learn effectively. They cooperate well with each other, and readily respond to the direction and guidance of their teachers. Pupils develop maturity and self-confidence, alongside a good-humoured resilience.
- Relationships between pupils are exceptionally positive. Pupils respect and get on well with each other. Pupils told inspectors that racism or homophobia are unknown.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. They settle quickly in lessons and get down to work without delay.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment. They become confident learners who are well prepared to take the step to the next level. Through their engagement in enrichment opportunities, pupils develop leadership skills and the ability to work with others productively.
- Over time, most pupils make outstanding progress from the start of Year 9 to the end of key stage 4. From starting points that are broadly in line with those seen nationally, pupils' attainment is typically high and well above national averages. This is particularly the case in English, science, mathematics and the humanities subjects.

- Pupils are able to take what they have learned in one subject and use that knowledge to deepen their learning in another.
- Pupils respond well to staff's expectations that all pupils aim high and reach their potential. From different starting points, pupils typically achieve very well, including the most-able and those with SEND.
- In 2018, by the end of key stage 4, disadvantaged pupils' progress was in line with that of other pupils with the same starting points. Current pupils' work shows that those pupils are progressing at the same rate as others.
- Most pupils gain one or more GCSE qualifications in modern foreign languages. Success in these subjects, as well as in the sciences, means that most pupils finish key stage 4 in a strong position to take forward their learning further at A level.
- Pupils develop excellent communication skills during their time at the school. They read widely, often devouring challenging texts, and write persuasively and accurately. Pupils become particularly articulate speakers who are at ease in the company of adults.
- The few pupils who attend alternative provision make good progress in their courses of study.
- In 2018, all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, progressed to appropriate apprenticeships, employment, training or further education, including within the school's sixth form.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- Students in the sixth form benefit from a curriculum that is well matched to their aspirations, and teaching that is of the highest standard.
- Students typically make at least good progress across a wide range of subjects to secure the grades they need for the next stage in their education or employment. In 2018, the proportion of students attaining grades A* to C in A level was significantly above the national average. Current students are typically producing work of an extremely high standard.
- Leaders know individual students very well. They ensure that students start courses that are a good match for their interests, aspirations and abilities.
- Each student's progress is monitored very carefully, and any students at risk of falling behind receives timely additional support so that they get back on track.
- Teaching in the sixth form shares all of the effective features of teaching in key stages 3 and 4. Teachers use their expert subject knowledge to inspire, interest and enthuse students who are strongly motivated to do their best.
- Levels of challenge are high, and pupils rise to the challenge. In German, for example, students demonstrate a strong understanding of the country's culture and traditions. Their spoken language is characterised by a high degree of fluency and spontaneity. In this and other subjects, teachers' careful planning enables students to make the transition from GCSE to A level well.
- Discussion and debate take place at a high level, such as sociology students discussing, with considerable sophistication, the impact of public perceptions of the level of

immigration upon attitudes to Brexit.

- Students know how to improve their work, because teachers provide them with clear and effective guidance and feedback.
- Students' behaviour is exemplary. They attend well and almost invariably complete their programmes of study. Students display consistently positive attitudes to learning and make very effective use of their time. They take the many opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and to the work of younger pupils. They are excellent ambassadors for the school.
- The help that students receive when applying for university or apprenticeship places is extensive and effective. Students gain a great deal from engaging in work experience and other work-related learning that is a good match for their intended career paths. The proportion who go on to university or employment is well above the national average.
- All sixth-form students who spoke with inspectors said that they felt safe at the school and valued the guidance they receive about how to minimise risk in potentially unsafe situations.

School details

Unique reference number	136990
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10083992

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive (non-selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	13 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1039
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	210
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr Steve Boor
Headteacher	Mrs Vicky Neale
Telephone number	01284 754857
Website	www.burytrust.org
Email address	vneale@burytrust.org
Date of previous inspection	18–19 September 2013

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Bury St Edmunds All-Through Trust. The board of trustees delegates some of its responsibilities to the local governing body, through the scheme of delegation. The school has its own leadership team and headteacher.
- The school is an average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils funded through the pupil premium is below the

national average.

- The percentage of pupils with SEND is below the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who have education, health and care plans.
- The school uses alternative provision at:
 - West Suffolk College
 - Green Light Trust, The Foundry, Bury Road, Lawshall, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP29 4PJ.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out following a complaint made to Ofsted, which raised serious concerns. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an inspection of the school should take place to follow up the whole-school issues that were raised. Inspectors sought to establish whether leaders' and managers' work was effective, particularly in relation to the arrangements for safeguarding children.
- Inspectors made visits to many lessons, some of which were carried out alongside a member of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and when moving around the school site at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors evaluated the quality of work in pupils' books.
- Meetings were held with: groups of pupils; the headteacher; senior leaders; subject leaders; a group of teachers and other members of staff; a group of teachers who have recently joined the profession; and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors spoke with representatives from the police and the local authority.
- The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with the chair of the trust board.
- Inspectors considered the 80 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Inspectors also considered the letters from several parents of pupils who currently attend the school. Inspectors spoke with and considered written communications from some parents of pupils who have left the school.
- There were no responses to the Ofsted questionnaires for staff and pupils.
- Inspectors evaluated the information contained in the school's documentation, including that relating to: safeguarding and child protection; curriculum development; pupils' achievement; attendance and behaviour; school development and improvement plans; leaders' self-evaluation; and leaders' allocation of pupil premium funding.

Inspection team

Jason Howard, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Russell Ayling	Ofsted Inspector
Gerard Batty	Ofsted Inspector
Diana Fletcher	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Lawrence	Ofsted Inspector
Al Mistrano	Her Majesty's Inspector
Peter Whear	Ofsted Inspector

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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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