

Inspection of a good school: Magdalen College School

Waynflete Avenue, Brackley, Northamptonshire NN13 6FB

Inspection dates: 3–4 March 2020

Outcome

Magdalen College School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Magdalen College School is an exciting place to learn, grow and achieve. Pupils feel valued. They know that teachers are there to support them. Pupils respond by attending regularly and working hard. They get on with their work, rarely with interruption from others. Many parents are positive about all aspects of the school. As one parent explained, 'This school is absolutely passionate in wanting your child to achieve and be the very best that they can be. Staff do all they can to make this possible.'

There is a wide range of trips and activities offered to all pupils. These include visits to Germany, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and a school musical. Pupils can attend many clubs and sporting activities at lunchtime and after school.

Leaders and staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils told us they feel safe in school and are well supported by the adults who teach and look after them. Pupils say that teachers deal with any bullying immediately.

Pupils receive careers education and are well prepared for the next stage in their education and employment. Many sixth-form students support younger pupils with their reading, and in their lessons and sporting activities.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have a clear vision for providing a broad and balanced education for all pupils. They aim to prepare pupils for adult life and to be active citizens beyond Magdalen College School. Leaders have constructed a curriculum that is ambitious for all. In Years 7 and 8, pupils study a full range of subjects. In Year 9, pupils begin their GCSE pathways. Extended learning days, and a wide range of enrichment activities, cover the subjects pupils have not chosen to study at GCSE level. Leaders are currently deciding whether to teach the key stage 3 curriculum over three years, not two.

The number of pupils undertaking the English Baccalaureate qualification remains low. Leaders are taking decisive action to improve this.

Leaders have written detailed curriculum plans for some subjects, including science, mathematics and art. The plans make it clear exactly what teachers must teach and the order in which they must teach it. Teachers check that pupils remember what they have learned before they move on to new subject content. Teachers use thoughtful and engaging ways to recap and review knowledge with pupils.

The curriculum is not as well planned in all subjects. In some subjects, leaders have not made it clear what pupils must learn and remember. Pupils do not learn the important knowledge well enough. They do not remember what they have learned in the long term.

Most teachers adapt lessons for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. This is helping them to study the same range of subjects as others. In some subjects, for example mathematics and history, teachers do not adapt their plans for pupils with SEND well enough.

Leaders have provided a range of professional development opportunities for staff. Teachers use the new approaches to teaching to enable pupils to learn more. Leaders are beginning to make links between subjects. In both history and science, pupils are learning about how our understanding of medicine and our universe have changed over time. However, the way in which leaders have linked the common themes in these subjects is not as well planned as it could be.

The curriculum supports pupils' personal development well. Pupils learn about healthy living and how to keep safe. Pupils told us that they also learn how to look after their physical and mental health. Pupils visit places of historical and scientific importance, for example Warwick Castle and the CERN laboratory in Geneva. Residential camps and volunteering provide opportunities for pupils to broaden their experiences. Pupils learn about faiths and lifestyles that may be different to their own.

Sixth-form students make good progress in most subjects. They work with increasing levels of independence. They are well supported by teachers who have excellent subject knowledge. Students produce some very high-quality work, including in art and science.

Pupils behave well around school. Classrooms are calm places where pupils are polite and show consideration for each other and adults. Learning is rarely hindered by low-level disruption.

Leaders are considerate of teachers' workload. Staff say that leaders listen to any concerns they have about their well-being, and act upon them quickly.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, including governors, take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. The safeguarding and pastoral teams are well trained and take effective action when staff or pupils raise concerns. Staff know what they must do to report any concerns they have.

Leaders make sure that all record keeping is detailed and up to date. They also make sure that staff receive important safeguarding training.

Leaders work well with external agencies and ensure that pupils have the help and support they need when required. Pupils can access a trained counsellor in school. Staff support pupils with mental health issues very effectively.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is a coherent, clear and detailed sequencing of learning in most subjects. This is enabling pupils to know more and to do more. In a few subjects, such as business studies and drama, curriculum plans focus on the activities that pupils will do, and do not identify clearly enough the important knowledge that pupils need to learn. Pupils do not remember the most important knowledge in the long term. Leaders should ensure that all curriculum plans enable all pupils to know and remember more.
- Leaders have not ensured that there are effective links between all subjects. Teachers do not reliably identify the important knowledge that pupils need to know and plan opportunities to revisit this knowledge in different subjects. Leaders should ensure that collaborative planning enables subject leaders to identify the substantive knowledge which pupils need in each different subject, and how they can work together to help pupils know more and remember more.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good, or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Magdalen College School, to be good on 17 October 2011.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	139158
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10110121
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,370
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	187
Appropriate authority	Board of Trustees
Chair of governing body	Dr Jane Powell
Headteacher	Ian Colling
Website	www.magdalen.northants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 February 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses one alternative provider: Gateway School Vocational Learning Centre.

Information about this inspection

- We spoke with pupils about life at school and their work. We held meetings with senior leaders, governors, teachers and non-teaching staff.
- We did deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, science, art and history. We met with subject leaders, spoke with pupils, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and met with teaching staff. A range of other subjects were also considered.

- We reviewed a range of documentation, including leaders' curriculum plans. Bullying logs and information relating to pupils' behaviour were examined.
- We considered the views expressed by parents in the 143 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. We also considered the 75 responses to the staff questionnaire and 216 responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- We reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding, including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff and the support provided for pupils.

Inspection team

Stephen Long, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Burton	Ofsted Inspector
Jenny Brown	Ofsted Inspector

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