

# Inspection of a good school: Biddulph High School

Conway Road, Knypersley, Biddulph, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST8 7AR

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Inspection dates:

8 and 9 February 2022

## **Outcome**

Biddulph High School continues to be a good school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils enjoy attending Biddulph High School. Leaders have created a strong sense of community. Staff and pupils respect each other and get on well together. They are proud to be part of the school. One pupil captured the views of many, describing the school as 'one big family'.

Pupils feel happy and safe at school. They are considerate and thoughtful. Pupils told inspectors that instances of bullying are dealt with well. They said that when incidents happen, staff respond quickly to resolve any issues.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils. Pupils generally behave well in lessons and around the site. Pupils are mostly enthusiastic about their learning and work well together in lessons.

Pupils can take part in a range of planned activities, including sports and arts clubs. For instance, pupils spoke enthusiastically about the 'dance inspire' project.

Leaders have made sure that each pupil feels part of the school community. They have put pupils' interests at the heart of what they do and are ambitious for what they can achieve.

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

Pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum. They study a range of subjects in Year 9. They can choose from a selection of courses to study at key stages 4 and 5. Pupils are well prepared for future academic study.

Leaders have identified what pupils should know and remember at key points in each subject. Teachers understand what they should be teaching and when they should be teaching it. However, in a small number of subjects, this is not the case. In these instances, pupils' knowledge is less secure.

Subject leaders, supported by the trust, have worked closely with teachers in the middle schools. In modern foreign languages, for example, the curriculum in Year 9 follows on from Years 7 and 8. This means that teachers have a clear picture of what pupils should know when they join the school.

Teachers work together closely to develop resources and share their planning. They use these well in lessons to develop and check pupils' understanding. Teachers are well trained and deliver the curriculum effectively. One teacher captured the views of many when they commented, 'Working as a team makes learning happen.' Pupils' views reflect this assessment. They say they can see how learning builds on what they have learned before.

The school's English Baccalaureate (EBacc) entry level is markedly below the government's national ambition for all schools. There are historical reasons for this, not least because of staffing difficulties. Leaders, working with the trust, are taking practical steps to improve this situation. As a result, the number of pupils studying EBacc subjects is increasing.

Developing pupils' reading skills is a school priority. There is a focused reading programme for younger pupils, and staff provide extra reading support to those who need it most. These pupils are improving their knowledge and understanding and are becoming more confident readers.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is part of the curriculum design in each subject. Pupils with SEND have the time and support necessary to access the same curriculum as their peers. Because of this, pupils with SEND do well in a range of subjects.

Pupils take part in a wide range of popular activities outside of the classroom. Leaders and staff have quickly restarted many of these following the pandemic. Pupils choose from over sixty clubs, varying from robotics to water polo to 'sent into space'. The school has a successful The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and a very popular 'dance inspire' community project. Leaders have constructed a well-organised personal development curriculum. This, and the character-building 'my personal best' programme, prepares pupils well for life beyond school.

Pupils receive high-quality careers information, advice, guidance and support. Older pupils value their careers education and how it helps them think about and make informed choices about their future education or employment and training.

The school's post-16 study programme meets students' needs and aspirations. Students in the sixth form develop socially and personally, as well as academically. Many students achieve well and go on to higher education.

Trustees and governors know the school well. They are aware of their responsibilities and carry them out appropriately. The trust works very closely with the school and other

partners. Together they have identified the right priorities to bring about further improvement.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about working at the school. They feel supported and appreciated by leaders. Staff told inspectors that school leaders value them and care about their well-being.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong safeguarding culture at the school.

All staff complete regular safeguarding training. Staff know what to do if they have concerns about a pupil. Pupils feel safe in school and know that they can talk to any member of staff about safeguarding issues. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through the personal development programme.

Safeguarding leaders take appropriate action when a pupil needs help. Leaders also access the right external support when it is needed. The trust and governors check that the school meets its safeguarding duties.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In a small number of subjects, leaders have not made sure that pupils' knowledge and understanding builds on what they have previously learned. As a result, pupils cannot integrate new ideas with what they have learned before. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum builds sequentially in every subject so that pupils can draw on their past learning.
- The proportion of pupils who choose to study a modern foreign language is low. This means that few pupils achieve the full suite of qualifications that make up the EBacc. Leaders should ensure that they continue to improve the curriculum in Year 9 so that more pupils choose to study a modern foreign language in Year 10.

## **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 outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2017.

## **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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137356
<b>Local authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10211423
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	13 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	784
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	193
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Martin Jones
<b>Headteacher</b>	Elizabeth Robinson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.biddulph.staffs.sch.uk/">www.biddulph.staffs.sch.uk/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	14 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the Potteries Educational Trust
- The school uses two alternative providers, Leek High School and Reaseheath College.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust and members of the governing body, including the chair. Inspectors also met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and the special educational needs coordinator.

- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, science, geography and modern foreign languages. They visited a sample of lessons in these subjects, met with subject leaders, reviewed pupils' work and held discussions with teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentary evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- Inspectors looked at safeguarding policies and reviewed leaders' records of checks on the suitability of staff and governors. They met with the leaders who have overall responsibility for safeguarding. Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils about how the school keeps pupils safe.
- Inspectors spoke with the leaders responsible for SEND and reading.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil questionnaires. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and carers.

### **Inspection team**

David Buckle, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Julie Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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