

Inspection of Marston Vale Middle School

The Crescent, Stewartby, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK43 9NH

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils know the school values of inspire, achieve, and empower. For most pupils this creates a sense of aspiration, where they want to do well. When pupils start school, they quickly feel a sense of belonging, as they are assigned to a house group and are supported by older peer mentors. This helps keep incidents of bullying to a minimum. Pupils know they have someone they can go to.

Pupils' behaviour is generally calm and orderly. They know that leaders have high expectations for behaviour. Consequences and support will follow if standards are not met.

Pupils have access to a broad curriculum, which is planned to build their knowledge. Recall activities are built into lessons, to help pupils connect what they have learned previously. Pupils get a mixed experience in lessons. They benefit from some expert teaching. However, they also receive some provision that is not well matched to their needs.

Pupils benefit from a range of extra-curricular provision and leadership opportunities that are open to all, for example becoming a digital leader. Pupils of all abilities get to represent the school in competitions, which gives them a great sense of pride.

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

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is well planned. They have provided training to support the development of planning and have recruited both primary and secondary subject specialists. In some subjects this has had an effective impact on improving teaching as these teachers have high levels of expertise and deliver leaders' intended curriculum effectively. Other teachers lack the subject-specific skills they need to teach pupils well. Leaders have not routinely checked carefully enough where this is the case and the impact their training has had on changing this. As a result, some weaker practice is not effectively identified and addressed by leaders.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are generally identified well. Some teachers are unfamiliar with what support must be in place for a pupil, and do not follow the SEND plans well. When this happens, pupils struggle to understand the content of what they are being taught. As a result, the learning is not adapted well enough to meet pupils' needs, and therefore pupils do not achieve as well as they should. There is variation in how far different leaders recognise these issues, or have the plans in place to address them.

Leaders ensure there are a wide range of opportunities for positive personal development. The personal, social and health education programme ensures pupils learn in an age-appropriate way about themes such as relationships and tolerance. Leaders ensure the careers programme is well planned and includes relevant links with employers and external providers. Pupils have opportunities to participate in community projects

such as restoring the orchard. Although leaders record attendance, a more detailed analysis of this data would improve the school's personal development work. This would ensure all groups of pupils, including pupils with SEND, are well represented.

There is a clear behaviour system in place that effectively challenges any disruption where and when it occurs. For example, inspectors witnessed pupils play fighting in tutor time. Although the behaviour policy was applied effectively to address the disruption, these pupils have not learned to self-regulate their own behaviour. Leaders monitor trends in behaviour and have worked to reduce issues such as physical altercations. As a result, behaviour around the school is generally calm and orderly.

Leaders have worked closely with the trust to ensure that the governing body has a strong educational skill set. This has had impact in developing the school's secure safeguarding culture. The trust has been actively involved in supporting the school to improve the quality of education and in developing the curriculum offer since the previous inspection. While progress has been made, leaders have not ensured the implementation of the curriculum is consistently good, or support for pupils with SEND is effective enough. As a result, leaders' vision for a high-quality education is not fully realised in practice.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured staff have had appropriate training to be able to identify pupils who may be at risk. This includes regular updates on topical safeguarding issues.

Concerns are carefully recorded and followed up through the referral process. There is a clear chronology and timeline.

Leaders work closely with other agencies such as social workers to ensure families get the support they need. They have ensured the single central record tracks all the necessary safe recruitment checks.

Pupils feel comfortable to report any worries or concerns they may have.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders' monitoring of provision for pupils with SEND lacks rigour. Not all teachers put in place identified strategies and resources to help pupils with SEND achieve well. Leaders must train teachers to arrange appropriate adjustments to meet pupils' needs, checking these are implemented and working well.
- Leaders' monitoring of the implementation of the curriculum lacks rigour. Some teachers lack the subject knowledge they need to deliver provision effectively. Leaders have not put in place the necessary subject-specific training and support to enable

these teachers to improve their practice. Leaders must ensure systems are in place to accurately identify where teachers have gaps in their subject knowledge or improvements are needed to their practice. Leaders must ensure that effective action is then taken to address this, and the impact closely monitored.

- Some pupils have not learned to self-regulate their behaviour. As a result, some pupils cause disruption at times when there is not an adult to regulate their behaviour or apply the behaviour policy. Leaders need to develop pupils' ability to self-regulate and treat each other with tolerance and respect at all times.

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

Unique reference number	145861
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10227598
Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	549
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	James Bryce
Headteacher	Estelle Jennings
Website	www.marstonvalemiddle.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 – 8 February 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Marston Vale Middle School joined the Chiltern Learning Trust in February 2017.
- The school has experienced a significant recent growth in numbers on roll.
- Alternative provision is not currently used.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection 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 carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, science, physical education, geography, and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects. Lesson visits took place across a variety of other subjects, including computing, art and religious education.
- Inspectors met with leaders, including the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers, the chief executive officer, directors, and governors.
- Inspectors explored the school's safeguarding culture through viewing safeguarding records and procedures, meeting with a range of pupils and staff and talking to safeguarding leaders.
- Inspectors considered the 125 responses and 76 free-text responses made by parents to the survey, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered the 39 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

James Chester, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Carole Herman

Ofsted Inspector

Karen Kerridge

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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