

Inspection of a good school: Fulbrook Middle School

Weathercock Lane, Woburn Sands, Milton Keynes, Bedfordshire, MK17 8NP

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 June 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and safe. They feel they are part of a strong, caring community. Pupils are confident that teachers know them well. As a result, most pupils have strong relationships with teachers, and know who to turn to if they are worried about anything. Pupils say that if bullying happens, teachers will help to stop it quickly.

Pupils benefit from a thorough programme of personal development. They have access to a wide and growing range of opportunities to develop their interests and talents, which they enjoy. They value the rewards and responsibilities they receive for being good role models.

Leaders expect pupils to 'aim high, work hard, be kind,' and to offer 'no excuses.' Most pupils behave well in lessons. However, some pupils do not always behave as well as they should. When this happens, lessons can be disrupted, which stops some pupils from learning as well as they want to.

Teachers are clear about what they expect pupils to learn in lessons, but some teachers do not always check carefully enough what pupils know or remember. The school does not always give parents the right information at the right time to help them support their child's learning.

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

The curriculum is well planned. Leaders have identified the important things that pupils need to know in each subject. Leaders have thought carefully about the order in which topics are sequenced, and how they link together. In some lessons, teachers use assessment well to identify the gaps in pupils' knowledge. They adapt their teaching to

make sure that pupils remember the important things they ought to. However, some teachers do not use assessment so effectively. They do not always check that pupils have understood what has been taught, so some pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

The school supports pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) successfully. Leaders ensure teachers understand the best strategies for each pupil with SEND and use them well. This helps these pupils access the same curriculum as their peers.

Leaders have introduced successful approaches to strengthen reading across the curriculum. This helps the weakest readers make rapid progress. Subject teachers encourage reading within subjects. These initiatives have helped create a strong reading culture, which is evident across all years.

Pupils become confident and independent young people who learn to understand and appreciate a range of cultures and beliefs. There are many opportunities for pupils to pursue their passions outside the classroom. They thrive on the sports, arts and learning-related clubs they can attend at lunchtime and after school. Pupils become leaders in areas including sport, music and the environment. Older pupils work as 'buddies' to younger pupils, who appreciate the support they get.

Leaders regularly ask staff how they can support them in their teaching. Staff are confident they are listened to. When leaders introduce changes, they consider how these can be achieved without increasing the amount of work that teachers do.

Most pupils behave well around the school site. They are polite and courteous. However, some pupils do not always meet the high expectations that leaders have of them in lessons. This leads to disrupted learning. Not all teachers address poor behaviour well. Pupils, parents and staff all expressed frustration that learning was interrupted too often in this way, and this slowed the progress that pupils were able to make in a range of classes.

Some parents said they were not always able to support their child's learning as effectively as they wanted to. This is because parents do not receive enough information from the school about what pupils are learning. School leaders have not put effective systems in place to ensure that all relevant information is shared with parents in an effective way.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspectors agreed that low-level disruption, assessment and parental communication may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a vigilant culture of safeguarding. Staff are quick to follow up all concerns. Safeguarding training is thorough and regularly updated. Staff liaise well with outside agencies and share information effectively. This means that pupils get the support that they require quickly. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe.

Leaders undertake all necessary recruitment checks. However, leaders and governors have not ensured that the record of these checks has been maintained as carefully as it needs to be. This has not put pupils at risk. Leaders acted decisively to correct the minor errors that we identified.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not always check what pupils have learned and remembered consistently well. Consequently, pupils sometimes develop gaps in their learning of which teachers are unaware. Leaders should develop effective assessment strategies that successfully identify what has, and has not, been learned by all pupils within lessons, and ensure that teachers use this information well to shape their teaching.
- Behaviour within lessons is not always as good as it should be. This means that the learning of pupils is sometimes disturbed and hampered, and pupils do not learn as well as they could. Leaders should work with teachers and pupils to develop approaches which minimise low-level disruption.
- School leaders have not always communicated effectively with parents. This has led to some parents feeling frustrated that they have not received timely and relevant information about their children, so they have not been able to support them as well as they would like to. School leaders should strengthen their practice in this area to help them engage more positively with parents, including ensuring that information on the school website is more accessible to all stakeholders.

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 on 6–7 December 2016.

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	137904
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10211067
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	434
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sally Hartley
Headteacher	Samantha Clancy
Website	http://www.fulbrookmiddleschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 – 7 December 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is planning significant change. It is currently a 9-13 middle school. During the 2022-23 school year it will admit Year 9 pupils for the first time, to begin its conversion to become a 9-16 secondary school.
- The school is a single-academy trust, Fulbrook Academy.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- 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 met with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the trust and ten other members of the trust board.

- Deep dives were carried out in English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. 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 looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects. They spoke to the special educational needs co-ordinator and pastoral leaders.
- Inspectors evaluated the information available on the school's website, including school policies, curriculum plans and information available for parents.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead to discuss the arrangements in place to safeguard all members of the school community. The checks leaders make on the suitability of staff were scrutinised, and records were checked.
- Inspectors reviewed records of behaviour, including incidents of bullying. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes.
- The inspectors reviewed 152 responses to Ofsted Parent View. They also reviewed the 133 free-text comments parents submitted during the inspection. The inspectors considered 31 responses to the staff survey and 111 responses to the pupil survey. Additionally, inspectors met with members of staff and spoke with pupils to gather their views of the school.

Inspection team

Paul Lawrence, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

John Constable

Ofsted Inspector

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