

Inspection of The Milton Keynes Academy

Fulwoods Drive, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK6 5LA

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 January 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders are ambitious for pupils to thrive in school and aspire to a future with no limits. Pupils learn about the world around them and about future education and employment opportunities. They find visiting speakers and presentations particularly engaging and memorable. The school cultivates close relationships with local businesses and external agencies.

Pupils enjoy having access to a wide range of activities outside of the classroom. There is a new house system, and house events are proving to be popular. These are building new, positive relationships between pupils. The school also prides itself on celebrating diversity and inclusivity. Pupils recognise and appreciate this. Staff at the school care passionately about the welfare of pupils.

An orderly whole-school line-up starts the school day and this sets a focused tone and standard of behaviour expected for lessons. However, although most pupils behave well, some pupils' behaviour can disturb the learning for others.

School leaders work hard to resolve bullying issues and are determined to overcome any disputes that exist between pupils. Pupils feel safe in school. However, a few have some concerns about occasional bullying. They usually, but not always, raise these concerns with an adult in school.

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

School and trust leaders are firm in their belief that every pupil is a potential leader for the future. They have clear priorities, policies and plans that are steadily bringing about improvement. Plans are based on regular and rigorous self-review activities. With ongoing support from the trust's lead practitioners, the school has good leadership capacity to continue the school's journey of improvement.

The behaviour of pupils requires further improvement. Some pupils do not behave well in lessons. This results in too many pupils being suspended from school and pupils needing to miss learning because of their behaviour. A new behaviour system is starting to significantly reduce disruption to lessons. This means teachers now have much more time to help pupils explore and develop their thinking. Leaders are determined to build mutually respectful relationships so that, over time, all pupils successfully manage their own behaviour.

The curriculum, created by school and trust leaders, is rich with connected knowledge that is designed to engage pupils and prepare them for their next steps in education and employment. Leaders intend that the curriculum includes diverse content that reflects the experiences and backgrounds of as many pupils as possible. They are starting to increase the diversity of resources, for example in the choice of books studied in English.

However, currently there are some weaknesses in the teaching of the curriculum. Although teachers have strong subject knowledge, new concepts are not always consistently explained. Staff use assessment information to identify topics that need revisiting. However, they do not routinely identify where pupils have gaps in their knowledge or ensure that pupils understand what they know and can remember. In subjects such as science and mathematics, pupils are able to apply suitable methods but cannot always explain these methods work or what they are finding out. As a result, pupils are not achieving as well as they could.

The support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is inconsistent. Leaders have recognised this. They are taking effective action to improve the quality of individual support plans and ensure that they are consistently used in lessons.

Pupils are encouraged to read independently for pleasure. Dedicated curriculum time is allocated to reading. Younger pupils have literacy lessons that strongly support their reading, and all pupils are encouraged to take books home. Intervention strategies provide helpful assistance for pupils who find reading more difficult.

Too many pupils do not come to school regularly, meaning they have lost touch with the normal routines of school life. Staff work hard with pupils and parents to understand and remove any barriers that stop pupils from attending. This has included responding to any negative impact on pupils' attendance and mental health as a result of the disruption caused by COVID-19. Attendance is stronger in the sixth form and is now rising in the rest of the school.

The number of sixth-form students on roll is currently low. Students benefit from good provision and teaching. Knowledgeable teachers plan lessons that are purposeful and productive. Students are supported in considering ambitious future destinations.

Teachers who are early in their careers benefit from comprehensive induction and training and are well supported by teacher mentors. Leaders have also prioritised ensuring that the school's curriculum resources are easy to use, to help reduce the workload for teachers.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff reliably report concerns that they have about the safety of pupils. The safeguarding oversight provides staff with several layers of support to ensure any concerns are dealt with. Leaders take safeguarding actions that are timely and effective. Regular reviews and audits by trust leaders help to maintain strong safeguarding arrangements. Leaders follow statutory recruitment practices to ensure that adults are suitable to work with pupils.

School leaders are alert to risks in the local area and work with local agencies, such as the police, to teach pupils how to stay safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Behaviour is not yet consistently good. As a result, some lessons are disturbed by pupils' behaviour, and some pupils miss out on vital learning because they are suspended from school. Leaders need to continue to provide training and support for staff so that they can implement the school's new behaviour policy consistently well. They should take effective action to reduce disruption to lessons and the number of suspensions.
- Teachers do not consistently identify and address gaps and misconceptions in pupils' learning. Consequently, pupils are not building well enough on what they have previously learned. Leaders should ensure that teachers have the expertise to assess and adapt learning across all subjects.
- Pupils with SEND do not always get the consistent support they need. Staff do not always adapt the curriculum well enough to meet pupils' individual needs. As a result, pupils are not achieving as well as they should. Leaders must provide training for staff so that they know how to adapt their teaching and to implement learning strategies that are more closely matched to pupils' needs.

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.

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	135665
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10256368
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	1161
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	47
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Abbie Rumbold
Principal	Gordon Farquhar
Website	www.miltonkeynesacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Creative Education Trust, a multi-academy trust comprising of primary and secondary schools.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provider and one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded 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 the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal, vice principals, assistant principals, lead practitioners and other leaders.
- Inspectors met with members of the school's Academy Council, the Academy Improvement Board, and lead practitioners from the Creative Education Trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, business education, physical education and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with leaders of personal, social and health education to discuss the curriculum and provision for pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons. Inspectors met with groups of pupils and spoke to pupils during lessons and at other times of the day. Inspectors also took into account pupils' responses to the Ofsted pupil survey.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of recruitment checks, talked to leaders responsible for safeguarding and looked at the school's safeguarding records and documents. Inspectors also talked to staff and pupils about safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including information about pupils' behaviour and attendance, minutes of governors' meetings and the school's development plan.
- Inspectors met with members of staff to discuss the school's work and considered their responses to the confidential Ofsted staff survey. They also looked at parents' responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Nick Simmonds, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Adrian Percival	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Cartwright	Ofsted Inspector
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