

# Inspection of Bedford Academy

Mile Road, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK42 9TR

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Inspection dates: 21 and 22 March 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Good

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

Pupils are happy and safe as leaders have established a culture where pupils are listened to. Staff build strong relationships with pupils so know their individual needs well. Those pupils who need it value the 'access centre'. This provides a welcoming safe space where pupils can access additional support with learning, or with any worries or concerns.

Pupils study an ambitious curriculum, where they have enough time to embed important knowledge. They build their subject knowledge effectively from Year 7 to Year 11. Students in the sixth form can study for a range of qualifications. Pupils leave with a suitable foundation for future study or employment. Most pupils now achieve well. Where pupils do not achieve as well as they might, they experience some pockets of inconsistency in how well the curriculum is taught.

Pupils behave well. They follow the clear expectations that leaders have set. Leaders track any incidences of discrimination carefully, including bullying. Pupils have confidence that where any issues occur, they are followed up effectively.

Pupils benefit from a range of inspiring wider opportunities. These include the 'super curriculum experience' which includes a variety of trips, visits, mentoring and work experience opportunities.

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

Leaders established that the previous curriculum model lacked ambition. Pupils did not study a language. They took some examinations early and did not have the time they needed to embed important knowledge well. Pupils did not achieve as well as they might have in these areas of the curriculum. Leaders have addressed these issues by re-designing the curriculum and providing training for staff so that pupils can now achieve well.

Leaders have supported teachers to build suitable curriculum plans. They have provided training and support so that most teachers have effective subject knowledge and practice. Teachers focus on identifying any gaps in pupils' knowledge and closing them. Pupils now get the time they need, across the curriculum, to deepen and embed their understanding. This is reflected in how well pupils recall important knowledge and the quality of work they produce. However, there are still occasions where teaching is not as effective and pupils do not learn as well. Where this is the case, leaders have not checked the impact of teachers' training and support carefully enough.

All pupils now study a language at key stage 3. Almost half go on to study languages at GCSE. Leaders have significantly increased the number of pupils entering the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). This will continue to increase year on

year. The Ebacc is an academically ambitious range of subjects that pupils can study at GCSE, which helps keep their options open for further study or future careers.

Leaders have developed a popular and broad sixth-form curriculum offer. They provide a range of academic and vocational qualifications that are well matched to students' future aspirations. Students typically achieve well.

Leaders ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs identified effectively. Leaders develop appropriate strategies to meet pupils' needs. Teachers use these strategies to enable pupils with SEND to access the same curriculum and achieve well. Pupils who need additional help with reading get this in the form of precisely targeted support programmes. Leaders regularly review pupils' progress on these programmes. Pupils are supported to read more fluently. They have regular opportunities to read. Time is dedicated to this. This supports pupils to develop a wider love of reading.

Pupils know and follow the 'BA Way,' which highlights the school's values and expectations. Learning is rarely disrupted. Where any issues do occur, leaders ensure suitable follow-up and support is put in place. Repeated poor behaviour is rare. Students in the sixth form are tolerant and respectful.

Pupils benefit from high-quality personal development opportunities. They have leadership opportunities and many chances to represent the school. These include computer science competitions, charity work and sports fixtures. Pupils learn how to treat each other with tolerance and respect. They do this through a well-planned programme of assemblies and personal, social and health education. Sixth-form students have opportunities to excel through a specific sports academy. There is a well-planned programme of careers and work-related education. All pupils are well prepared for their future learning or careers. Students in the sixth form are provided with work experience, expert guidance and university visits through a programme of highly effective careers guidance.

Governors and the trust effectively challenge and support. Leaders have built positive relationships with the local community. They prioritise well-being. Staff feel supported and valued. Leaders' work to support well-being has been used as a case study by the Department for Education.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that appropriate safer recruitment processes are in place. They diligently review and refine their practice.

Staff receive regular safeguarding training. Weekly updates keep staff informed of topical issues. Staff know how to identify and share any concerns.

Leaders keep accurate records of concerns and act promptly to follow them up. They work effectively with external agencies to support pupils' needs. Designated safeguarding leads are knowledgeable and work as a team to share important information.

Leaders have ensured pupils are listened to, aware of risk and have access to services such as well-being and pastoral support.

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

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

- There are still a small number of subjects where teaching is less effective, and pupils achieve less well. This is because leaders have not identified carefully enough where teachers need further training and support to develop their pedagogical or subject knowledge. Leaders need to ensure that all teachers get the targeted support they need to improve their practice, so that all pupils achieve well across the full curriculum.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136085
<b>Local authority</b>	Bedford
<b>Inspection number</b>	10227275
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 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>	1340
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	195
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	David Hoare
<b>Headteacher</b>	Chris Deller
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.bedfordacademy.co.uk">www.bedfordacademy.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	14 May 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The headteacher has been in post since January 2019.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider and one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school's most recent graded inspection, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005, was in October 2015, when it was judged to be good. The school was inspected in May 2019 under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

## Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) 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 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, history, languages and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with curriculum 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 conducted meetings with the school leaders in the following areas: the headteacher and senior leadership team, human resources, careers, behaviour and attendance, pastoral care and personal development, safeguarding, sixth form and pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors met with the trust chief executive officer and director of school improvement to discuss the role of the trust. Inspectors met with the local academy board and trustees regarding governance. An inspector met with the chief education officer at Bedford Borough Council to discuss the local authority's view of the school.
- To gather their views on the school, inspectors spoke in formal meetings to groups of pupils, and also spoke to pupils around the school site at breaktimes and lunchtimes. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss the use of alternative provision and the small number of pupils on part-time timetables. An inspector spoke to representatives of the alternative providers and parents of pupils who attend.
- To evaluate the school's safeguarding culture, inspectors viewed safeguarding records and procedures, and met with a range of pupils, staff and leaders to discuss safeguarding.
- The 75 responses and 45 free-text responses made by parents to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, were considered. Inspectors also considered 114 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

James Chester, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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