

Inspection of a good school: Gothic Mede Academy

High Street, Arlesey, Bedfordshire SG15 6SL

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 March 2023

Outcome

Gothic Mede Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school. They speak confidently about their work and they are motivated to learn. School is a friendly place where everyone helps each other to be the best they can be.

Pupils enjoy opportunities to learn beyond the classroom. They value the roles and responsibilities available to them, such as being 'values ambassadors' or completing challenges designed to teach them life skills.

Pupils live up to the school's motto of 'Pride in ourselves, pride in our school, pride in our community'. They work hard and want to achieve the best they can.

Almost all pupils behave well. They walk around school calmly and show respect for adults and each other throughout the day. Pupils are eager to take part in class discussions and to show their learning efforts to teachers and friends. A few pupils need help to make the right choices about their behaviour. Sometimes, pupils are confused by inconsistencies in the approach to behaviour used by staff. However, overall behaviour is good, and managed well.

Bullying is rare. When it does happen, staff deal with it effectively. Pupils know there are trusted adults they can talk to if they are worried about something.

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

Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for providing high-quality education for all. They have constructed a well-considered curriculum in all subjects to support this aim. Leaders have identified and organised the knowledge that they want pupils to learn into a logical order. This helps teachers to plan activities that build on what pupils already know and can do. Teachers use their checks on pupils' learning effectively. They ensure that pupils understand previous learning well before introducing new ideas or more difficult

content. This helps pupils to remember important knowledge and understand more complex ideas.

Pupils' knowledge grows from one term to the next in a logical way. They apply their knowledge independently to solve problems. The classroom and outdoor environments in the early years provide children with a wide range of relevant learning opportunities. This supports them to apply and explore what they are learning through their play. Pupils in key stage 2 link their learning to knowledge they have learned in previous years.

Leaders prioritise reading. Their approach to teaching reading and phonics is well planned. From the early years, staff focus on language, which means that children learn to communicate well. Staff teach the phonics programme effectively. Reading books are carefully matched with the sounds that pupils know. This helps pupils to build confidence and fluency in their reading. Staff swiftly identify pupils who require additional help and ensure they are supported effectively. All children learn to read words and simple sentences by the end of Reception. Pupils build on this in Year 1 and Year 2, so that most pupils learn to read well. They use their phonic knowledge effectively to help them read and spell unfamiliar words.

Leaders ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are included in all aspects of school life. Pupils with SEND learn alongside their peers. Leaders ensure staff have the expertise to adapt the curriculum as required to meet individual pupils' needs. They make sure pupils with SEND are well supported with their learning.

Pupils mostly listen attentively and concentrate on their work. They focus on activities for extended periods of time. However, there are some pupils who find it hard to manage their own behaviour. Leaders provide effective support for these pupils, but these strategies are not understood by all staff and are not included in the current behaviour policy. This means some teachers do not apply strategies consistently. They want more guidance on how to help some pupils meet staff's high expectations of behaviour.

Leaders protect staff from bullying and harassment and make sure they have time to complete assessment tasks. However, in a small minority of subjects, curriculum leaders are not afforded time to check how well the subject is taught. Leaders have plans to address this. Governors and trustees support leaders to help staff to develop their expertise.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff are alert to the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Staff report any concerns about pupils' safety or well-being swiftly. The designated safeguarding lead secures the help that pupils need. This includes seeking help from external professionals where required.

Governors and trustees make regular checks to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are robust. Leaders ensure that they complete and record all required checks to ensure adults are suitable to work in the school.

The curriculum teaches pupils how to keep safe in a range of situations. Pupils know how to work safely when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are some pupils who need help to make the right choices about their behaviour. The current behaviour policy does not include strategies that leaders use to manage and improve the behaviour of a few pupils. Some staff do not use strategies consistently. This can cause some staff to feel unsupported when managing behaviour. It also causes confusion for some pupils. Leaders should ensure that all staff understand leaders' approach to promoting good behaviour. They should ensure that the behaviour policy is used consistently by all staff and matches the approach and strategies being utilised.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 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.

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	140281
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10255202
Type of school	First
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	312
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mark Greaney
Principal	Thomas Clarke
Website	www.gothicmede.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	27 and 28 June 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school is a lower school. Most pupils join in Nursery and leave at the end of Year 4, completing the primary phase of their education in a middle school.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector met with representatives of the governing body. She also met with several representatives from the trust, including the chief executive officer, the chief operating officer and the director for education.

- The responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted’s pupil survey and Ofsted’s staff survey, along with written comments from parents, were considered by the inspector.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised by the inspector, including curriculum plans, school development plans, policies and documentation and records for behaviour and attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector held meetings with leaders and governors to discuss their actions to keep pupils safe. Discussions were held with pupils and staff to gather information about the culture of safeguarding at the school. The inspector also scrutinised policies and records, including the school’s single central record of recruitment and vetting checks.
- The inspector spoke to groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning in lessons to understand what it is like to be a pupil in their school.

Inspection team

Bridget Harrison, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

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