

Inspection of a good school: Old Buckenham High School

Abbey Road, Old Buckenham, Attleborough, Norfolk NR17 1RL

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 March 2023

Outcome

Old Buckenham High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a strong sense of community at Old Buckenham. Pupils and staff describe trusting each other, feeling safe and being happy. Most students say that if they are worried, they are confident that concerns will be taken seriously. Pupils speak highly of the relationship between staff and pupils. Almost all parents would recommend the school.

Leaders in the school have high expectations of pupils. Most pupils consistently meet these expectations. Pupils wear their uniform with pride, and are polite and courteous to staff, visitors and each other. Standards of behaviour in classrooms and during social times are appropriate. Pupils are expected to take responsibility for their actions. They describe a 'nice environment' that has been improved by investment in facilities.

Pupils and staff are clear that bullying happens in the school. This also happens online. However, most pupils say bullying is rare and that action will be taken to resolve issues quickly. Leaders do not tolerate bullying and pupils know this. Pupils understand how to protect themselves online and how to report concerns.

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

Leaders have adopted a curriculum that provides pupils with a broad and balanced education. Pupils study a wide range of subjects through to GCSE, and their outcomes are in line with pupils nationally in most subjects. Leaders are ambitious for all pupils, but they recognise that students do not yet achieve well in all subjects. Leaders' ambitions extend to ensuring that the number of pupils entered for the EBacc increases. There is no narrowing of the curriculum. Teachers use assessment well. They recognise where there are gaps in pupils' knowledge and adopt strategies to enable pupils to catch up.

The careers curriculum is a strength of the school. The programme is carefully planned and implemented. All pupils benefit from this approach. Pupils with special educational

needs and/or disabilities receive an individual programme and support for work experience and careers guidance.

The school's reading strategy was implemented in September 2022. It demonstrates leaders' commitment to prioritising reading in the curriculum. The full impact of this strategy has not yet been realised. In some subjects, reading booklets are used very effectively to support pupils' learning. Leaders state that priority has been given to reading, but the systematic checking of spelling, punctuation and grammar is their next step.

Pupils' wider development is supported effectively by the personal development (PD) programme. The PD curriculum has been developed in consultation with pupils, and reflects the context of the school. Pupils experience age-appropriate input from external speakers and can explain how this supports their wider knowledge. School staff receive appropriate training to support their delivery of this wider curriculum. Pupils can describe the range of extra-curricular activities available to them. Over half of all school pupils participate in regular activities. Vulnerable pupils participate fully.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils and these are typically met. Staff describe pupils' behaviour as positive. The calm and orderly classrooms allow pupils to focus and work hard on their studies. There is a published behaviour system which is understood by pupils. However, the policy is not always applied consistently by teachers. This leads to increased unwanted behaviour in a small number of classes. Pupils say that unkind language is sometimes used in conversation. Leaders are aware of this and are taking ongoing steps to address it.

The school is well led and managed. Leaders consider the impact of workload before implementing school-wide strategies. Staff are confident that the new leadership of the school is having a positive impact on its culture. The Sapienta Education Trust provides leaders with challenge and support to ensure the ethos and culture of the school are suitably ambitious.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Trustees have a clear approach to safeguarding. There is considerable and relevant safeguarding expertise across the trust board. The systems in place to monitor pupils' safety are robust at all levels. This approach is evident through leaders' attention to the single central record, detailed record-keeping, and approach to safer recruitment. Vulnerable pupils are identified effectively and supported. Leaders act in a timely manner to find appropriate external support for these pupils if required. Pupils strongly agree that they feel safe in school. Most parents confirm that they feel their child is safe in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The behaviour system is not consistently applied by all teachers. This means that disruption is not addressed as swiftly as it should be. Leaders should ensure that their high expectations of this system are implemented consistently.
- Common misconceptions around spelling, punctuation and grammar are not identified systematically or regularly. A lack of feedback prevents pupils from acting on errors. Leaders should review the systems to ensure that this is regularly monitored and improved.

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 predecessor school (Old Buckenham High School) to be good in October 2015.

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	146144
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10255156
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	509
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Peter Rout
Headteacher	Claire Elliott
Website	www.obhs.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined Sapienta Education Trust in 2018.
- The current headteacher has been in post since September.
- The school does not currently make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher and other staff. They also met representatives from the board of trustees and chief executive officer.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: design technology, English, modern foreign languages and science. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors spoke with staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to review their knowledge, records and actions. The inspectors also looked at safeguarding records and actions, and reviewed information about the safer recruitment of staff.
- Pupils from different year groups were met with to talk about their learning and experiences at school.
- The inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school improvement plan, curriculum documentation and school policies.
- There were 98 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 83 free-text comments from parents.

Inspection team

Jonathan Rockey, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Victoria Hearn

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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