

Inspection of Mark Rutherford School

Wentworth Drive, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK41 8PX

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 June 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils enjoy attending Mark Rutherford School. They benefit from a wide range of trips, visits and clubs, such as trips to museums and theatre productions and participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. These increase their confidence, deepen their knowledge and broaden their range of experiences and interests.

Pupils have opportunities to develop their leadership skills through, for example, the school council and participation in productions and competitions. Pupils learn about a range of careers and courses. This contributes towards preparing pupils for the next stages in their education and employment.

Pupils are usually keen to learn. Most pupils behave well, both in and out of lessons. They treat each other and staff with respect. A significant proportion of pupils are frustrated that some lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour, and they are also frustrated about how some boys speak to girls.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Well-chosen visitors enhance what is taught in lessons about well-being and personal safety.

All pupils access a broad and engaging curriculum. Pupils in the Nightingale Centre follow a curriculum specific to their needs. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), however, do not always receive effective support in lessons.

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

Leaders have designed a carefully thought out curriculum that identifies important knowledge pupils require to achieve well. Learning is broken down so that it makes sense, ensuring that pupils build upon their existing knowledge. Leaders build in opportunities during lessons through their chosen 'Do Now Activities' to gauge pupils' knowledge over time. This helps pupils know and remember more.

Leaders increasingly check how well pupils are achieving. Pupils receive individual support to help them perform as well as they can. Many teachers check pupils' knowledge well. They identify misconceptions, planning teaching that supports pupils to reduce any gaps in their knowledge. Learning challenges pupils to think. This deepens their knowledge and enables them to apply it to different contexts.

Leaders monitor the effectiveness of teachers' delivery of the curriculum. However, this is not consistently effective across all areas. This is because some subject leaders do not have secure knowledge of how to implement the curriculum. Consequently, the curriculum is not delivered consistently well across all subjects. Where the quality of education is most effective, such as in art and physical education, teachers skilfully adapt their teaching to ensure that pupils, including

those with SEND, can access the curriculum successfully. However, some teachers do not know how to use checks on pupils' learning to adapt their teaching to meet pupils' specific needs effectively. Not all teachers understand how to best make the changes to what they teach to ensure pupils, including those with SEND, can access the curriculum. Therefore, some groups of pupils do not routinely make the progress that they should.

Reading has been prioritised, as leaders understand its importance to pupils' learning in all curriculum areas. Leaders are making significant improvements in identifying and supporting weaker readers. As a result, these pupils become increasingly fluent and accurate in their reading.

Students in the sixth form follow a broad and well-delivered curriculum. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They match work to their needs well, ensuring that students are provided with a challenging and engaging curriculum. Consequently, students achieve well and are ready for their next steps.

Leaders have high expectations of behaviour. However, on occasion, some teachers do not follow the behaviour policy consistently. In these cases, a significant minority of pupils interrupt learning in these lessons. Some boys do not speak to girls with sufficient respect. They have not learned why this is unacceptable. Pupils attend well and are punctual.

The school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum ensures that pupils learn about topics such as healthy relationships and how to be active citizens. However, leaders do not rigorously check pupils' knowledge. There are gaps in pupils' knowledge, and some pupils' attitudes are not as positive, for instance the attitude of some boys towards girls.

Leaders and governors have a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Leaders are putting in place well-considered improvements to the curriculum and pastoral system. Leaders are checking the impact of their actions. These are beginning to bear fruit, but the changes are not fully embedded, in part due to difficulties with gaps in staffing. Teachers, including early career teachers, are provided with training and support. They are supported with their well-being and workload. The leadership of the Nightingale Unit has developed very high-quality provision for pupils who attend it.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders carry out robust checks on adults who wish to work with children.

The safeguarding team checks on pupils' well-being and safety, identifying concerns rapidly. The team uses local authority services and staff in school, such as counsellors, to provide pupils with personalised support. Governors carry out regular

checks on safeguarding in school. Staff are trained in how to identify and support pupils.

Pupils know what to do if they have any concerns. They learn about and have secure knowledge of topics such as online safety and consent. They say that they usually feel safe in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- While many teachers and subject leaders have a clear understanding of what effective teaching is and how pupils, including those with SEND, learn, others do not. As a result, the quality of the implementation of the curriculum is not consistently high. Pupils are not always engaged in their learning, and therefore they are not able to make the progress they should. Leaders should provide training to ensure that all teachers can implement the curriculum as leaders intend and that subject leaders are all able to monitor their area of leadership effectively.
- Some pupils do not have positive and respectful attitudes to their own learning or towards each other, particularly in how some boys speak to girls. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum, including that for PSHE, robustly promotes positive attitudes so that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- While leaders have high expectations of behaviour, some teachers do not consistently follow the behaviour policy. As a result, a minority of pupils disrupt the learning of others. Leaders should provide training to teachers to ensure that expectations are clearly understood by staff and pupils and are consistently enforced.

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	139160
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10268045
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
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	1,282
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	173
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	John Warehand
Headteacher	Kelli Foster
Website	http://www.markrutherford.beds.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	10 and 11 March 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders run a specialist unit on site called the Nightingale Centre. This unit is for students who have an education, health and care plan where autism spectrum disorder is identified as their primary need.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This is the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator.
- Deep dives were carried out in six subjects: English, science, mathematics, art, physical education and history. For each deep dive, an inspector met 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.
- Members of the local governing body met with the lead inspector.
- The lead inspector spoke to the local authority school improvement partner.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at other times around school. They met with groups of pupils.
- Inspectors held a series of meetings with leaders and pupils to discuss the school's safeguarding arrangements. They scrutinised a range of records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- The lead inspector considered the 193 responses and 132 free-text responses received during the inspection to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. He also considered the 82 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 339 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Steve Woodley, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Cathy Barr	Ofsted Inspector
Caroline Dawes	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Skelly	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Stainsby	His Majesty's Inspector

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