

# Inspection of Brooklands Middle School

Brooklands Drive, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire LU7 3PF

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Inspection dates: 3 and 4 July 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

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

Pupils at Brooklands Middle School are happy. They enjoy coming to school. They know their teachers want them to do well. Most pupils work hard in lessons to meet these high expectations.

Pupils are polite, respectful and engaging. They celebrate difference. They are clear that it does not matter if something makes you different. You are still welcomed and included. As a result, bullying is rare. On the unusual occasion where bullying does happen, pupils fully trust adults to sort it out.

Pupils feel part of a community. They form highly positive relationships with each other and with adults. These relationships create an environment where everyone feels safe. Pupils know that there is always someone who will help them if they are feeling down. Mental health champions make sure that everyone has a friend to talk to or to play with. Older pupils are well supported and excited about moving to upper school. This excitement is tinged with sadness because they know they are leaving something special behind.

A broad range of opportunities is offered for pupils to develop new, and nurture existing, talents. All pupils take advantage of these opportunities with enthusiasm.

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

Leaders have adopted a curriculum that is ambitious, broad and creative. They have set out exactly what pupils need to know to succeed in the next stage of their education. This knowledge is broken down into small pieces. Leaders use information about what pupils already know when they join Year 5 to adapt plans and plot precisely what pupils will learn as they progress to Year 8. The curriculum is planned so that pupils have the knowledge to succeed when they transition to upper school.

Subject leaders have a clear understanding of how best to meet the overarching curriculum aims. Most teachers deliver the planned curriculum well. They help pupils to succeed by using precise explanations and examples. They use questions to check effectively what pupils know and if they are ready to move on. Pupils respond by engaging in learning activities with confidence. They add new information to what they already know and deepen their understanding. Pupils learn well and can apply this knowledge to solve problems.

Senior leaders have prioritised the use of training time for generic approaches to teaching. This has left a deficit in some teachers' knowledge of how to teach the subject curriculum well. Consequently, teachers sometimes use, for instance, less helpful examples, explanations and feedback to pupils' ideas. This slows the pace of learning for some pupils.

In some subjects, questioning is not as helpful as in most. It focuses on how to structure an answer, but not on checking and developing pupils' understanding. This means pupils sometimes do not know how to improve their work, and teachers' understanding of what pupils know is not always accurate.

Leaders have prioritised reading. They have trained staff in the teaching of phonics. Their intervention programme supports struggling readers to catch up. As a result, most pupils read with confidence and are improving their fluency.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access the same curriculum as their peers. Leaders have equally high expectations for pupils with SEND. Leaders understand the needs of individual pupils. They share strategies with teachers to help them overcome pupils' specific barriers to learning. Teachers use these strategies to make suitable adaptations to their teaching. Consequently, pupils with SEND progress well.

Pupils behave well, and most display a positive attitude to learning. There is a calm and orderly environment around the school. On the rare occasions where pupils fail to meet leaders' expectations, teachers are quick to intervene effectively.

Pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain. They understand tolerance and respect. They have an age-appropriate understanding that some people's characteristics are protected by law. Opportunities are provided for pupils to take on leadership roles and contribute to improving school life.

Staff are proud to work at this school. They support the leaders' vision. Staff feel valued, and say that their workload and general well-being are considered by leaders and governors.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have put in place robust systems to record and track concerns. Training for staff helps them identify and support pupils who may be at risk. When staff have a concern, they are quick to report it.

Leaders engage proactively with local agencies. They are relentless in helping pupils and their families access the help they need. Leaders understand the local context. They use this information to adapt the curriculum so that pupils know how to keep themselves safe online and in the real world.

Governors are effective in overseeing leaders' work to keep all pupils safe. This includes ensuring that checks on adults are completed in advance of taking up roles in the school. These checks are recorded in detail in the school's single central record of pre-employment checks.

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

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

- Some teachers do not use assessment as well as most. They focus on how to structure an answer rather than assessing pupils' understanding. This means that they, and their pupils, do not know clearly enough what pupils need to spend more time on. Leaders should ensure that all teachers understand how to effectively check how well pupils understand what they have been taught.
- The training that teachers receive is often generic and not directly related to the subject knowledge they are teaching pupils. As a result, some pupils progress more slowly than they should. Leaders should ensure that subject leaders are able to adapt whole-school training to make it subject specific and focused on the best pedagogical approaches for their subjects.

## 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>	137636
<b>Local authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10287114
<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9 to 13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	588
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Ian Watson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Julie Hodgson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.brooklandsschool.co.uk">www.brooklandsschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 and 2 May 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is the only school in the Brooklands Academy Trust.
- Since the last inspection, a new chair of governors has been appointed.
- After-school care is provided on site. This is run by a separately registered and inspected childcare provider.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, deputy headteacher and special educational needs coordinator. They met with governors and the school's independent improvement adviser.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, art and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also listened to a sample of pupils read.
- To inspect the curriculum further, inspectors looked at examples of pupils' writing, reviewed curriculum documentation for geography and science, and reviewed documentation setting out support for pupils with SEND.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to review safeguarding records, as well as the administrative coordinator to scrutinise the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. To further evaluate safeguarding, inspectors also spoke to governors, staff, pupils and parents, and reviewed surveys.
- To gather pupils' views, inspectors spent time observing and speaking to pupils. The lead inspector reviewed 26 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- To gather parents' views, inspectors reviewed 84 responses and 59 free-text responses submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors spoke with several staff and reviewed 47 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

## Inspection team

Dave Gibson, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Simon Warburton	Ofsted Inspector
Wayne Jarvis	Ofsted Inspector

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