

Inspection of a good school: Alameda Middle School

Station Road, Ampthill, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK45 2QR

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 October 2023

Outcome

Alameda Middle School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Jacqueline Ross. This school is a single academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Nicolette Ford.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Alameda Middle School know that their teachers want them to do well. They understand that expectations of them are higher than previously. They work hard and do their best. They are well prepared for their next school.

Pupils receive specialist teaching from Year 5. They enjoy using the science laboratories and facilities for art, music and design technology. This means that they learn to be scientists, musicians and artists from the start of their time in the school.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is calm and orderly. Pupils quickly adapt to the new routines when they join the school. Pupils are friendly, tolerant and respectful towards each other.

Pupils are very enthusiastic about the additional opportunities available to them. They can join lots of different clubs, take part in musical productions and contribute to improving school life. This gives them an opportunity to rehearse the skills they learn. Pupils can apply for a wide range of popular leadership opportunities, such as sports leaders or the junior leadership team. They take these roles seriously and use them to give back to the school community.

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

The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders liaise with lower schools to understand what pupils already know. Detailed plans set out what pupils should learn from Year 5 to Year 8. This knowledge is carefully ordered so pupils build on what they

have learned before. For example, in mathematics, the curriculum is broken down into small steps for all pupils. This helps teachers quickly spot and correct pupils' misconceptions.

In most areas, teachers use their own secure subject knowledge to deliver the planned curriculum well. Pupils know what to expect in lessons. They understand that 'do now' tasks help them remember things they have learned previously. Teachers explain new ideas clearly. They use questions carefully to check pupils are ready to move on. Pupils receive useful feedback from teachers during lessons. This helps them to improve. Most pupils achieve well across the range of subjects. However, leaders know that the positive changes they have made to how some subjects are taught are relatively new and are not consistently embedded.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are included fully in school life. For example, they access the same curriculum as their peers. Leaders have a carefully considered approach to identifying the needs of pupils with SEND. Skilled adults provide effective additional support. In most cases, teachers adapt their teaching so that pupils with SEND produce work to the same standard as everyone else. Nevertheless, a few parents feel that provision for their children does not meet their needs.

Leaders understand the importance of pupils being strong readers. Pupils who struggle with reading when they join the school are well supported. Leaders look at what pupils need to do to learn to read well and provide an effective catch-up programme. As a result, pupils become confident and fluent readers.

The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour. The school has trained staff to implement new systems for behaviour management. Positive behaviour is emphasised and reinforced. As a result, most pupils behave well and display positive attitudes to learning.

Provision for personal development is a significant strength. Pupils enjoy an extensive programme of trips and residential visits. The personal, social and health education curriculum is well planned. Pupils learn about different cultures and types of relationships, and how to maintain healthy lifestyles. The school provides careers guidance which helps pupils learn about different pathways they could take in the future.

Senior leaders combine a strong drive for improvement with a caring and compassionate approach. Staff, trustees and most parents agree that the school is improving rapidly. However, a few parents feel that communication between home and school could be improved.

Leaders and trustees have a highly accurate knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Staff feel valued and respected by senior leaders and are very positive about working in the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders' carefully considered improvements to the way subjects are taught are relatively new and are not securely embedded in some areas. However, leaders have an accurate view of what is working well and what needs to be done to improve further. Therefore, the school should continue its work refining the way in which the curriculum is delivered, ensuring that pupils build secure subject-specific knowledge in all areas so they achieve consistently well in all areas of the curriculum.
- The school has experienced some challenges in the leadership of provision for pupils with SEND and communication between school and parents has not been as strong as it could be. As a result, some parents of pupils with SEND feel that provision for their children does not meet their needs. They are unclear about why decisions are taken and do not know how best to work well with the school to support their children's learning. The school should ensure that communication with parents, particularly of pupils with SEND, continues to be strengthened and gives them the information they need to help and support their children effectively.

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 February 2018.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	137249
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10288502
Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	728
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Nicolette Ford
Headteacher	Jacqueline Ross
Website	www.alamedamiddleschool.org.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	27 and 28 February 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a new chair of trust and a new headteacher have been appointed. The current headteacher took up post in September 2022.
- The school is the only school in the Alameda Academy Trust.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, deputy headteachers and special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector met with trustees and

the local authority's school improvement adviser.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum and reviewed curriculum documentation for a range of subjects. They also reviewed documentation setting out support for pupils with SEND.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed records of behaviour, including incidents of bullying. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes.
- To gather pupils' views, inspectors spent time observing and speaking to pupils. The lead inspector reviewed 143 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. Inspectors spoke with several staff and reviewed 62 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. To gather parents' views, the lead inspector reviewed 158 responses and 119 free-text responses submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

John Constable, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jennifer Brassington

Ofsted Inspector

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