

Inspection of Gravenhurst Academy

High Street, Gravenhurst, Bedford, Bedfordshire, MK45 4HY

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 March 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act

The principal of this school is Debbie Randall. This school is part of Bedfordshire Schools Trust (BEST), which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Dr Alan Lee, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ilona Bond. The principal is responsible for this school and one other.

What is it like to attend this school?

Gravenhurst is a small school with big ambitions. From the moment children join in Reception, they are encouraged to be curious. They develop an enthusiasm for learning that grows as they move through the school.

Pupils love the exciting experiences adults plan for them. They know when to have fun and when to listen, thanks to clear routines and high behaviour expectations. Pupils work hard to meet the adults' high expectations in lessons. Many pupils achieve very well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Pupils flourish in the school's friendly environment. They say the school is like a big family, where everyone cares for each other. At social times pupils play happily together across year groups. Relationships between pupils and adults are warm and nurturing. Older pupils look after younger pupils on trips, at playtimes and during whole school themed curriculum days. Pupils are safe here.

The school's outdoor spaces offer pupils many opportunities to develop their skills and talents. Whole school shows take place in the outdoor theatre. Pupils plant seeds and bulbs or investigate wildlife in the allotment. In the forest area, pupils learn to take risks, build their confidence or toast marshmallows over a fire.

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

The school and trust have put in place an ambitious curriculum. It is thoughtfully designed to give pupils the key knowledge they need in each subject. The curriculum breaks down learning into manageable chunks. These are ordered so that pupils build a strong body of knowledge over time. The curriculum starts in early years. Children in Reception are exceptionally well prepared for their later learning.

There is a strong focus in the curriculum on teaching subject-specific vocabulary. In Reception, key words are identified for each topic. Adults model correct use of these in their interactions with children. Pupils use this subject-specific vocabulary appropriately in their recorded work and when talking about their learning.

Teachers deploy a variety of approaches that enable pupils to succeed. Teachers recap prior learning often. They explain new concepts clearly and make connections between subjects. They use skilful questioning to check pupils' understanding and identify any gaps in learning. The needs of pupils with SEND are identified quickly. The school has the same ambition for pupils with SEND. Teachers meet their needs through adaptations to the curriculum, or through carefully planned adult support.

Most pupils, including those pupils with SEND, build their learning exceptionally well. They call upon what they have learned before and apply it effectively to new learning. In a science lesson on forces, for example, pupils learned about friction.

They applied this to an explanation of the forces at work when someone dives into a swimming pool or rides a bicycle over gravel.

Pupils' behaviour in the classroom is exemplary. This is thanks to engaging lessons, consistent routines and clear adult modelling of the expected standards. Pupils learn in a calm and well-ordered environment. The rare minor disruptions that arise are well managed. If a pupil's behaviour does not meet expectations, the school intervenes rapidly to help them to improve. Pupils' attendance rates are high.

Reading is a high priority. Adults promote a love of books by sharing their own reading preferences, current and past. They read stories to pupils often, modelling enthusiasm and excitement that are infectious. In Reception and key stage 1, expert phonics teaching ensures pupils learn rapidly the sounds they need to become fluent readers. Adults identify any pupils who need extra help. They deliver this effectively so that pupils catch up quickly.

The programme for pupils' personal development is impressive. There is a range of popular extra-curricular clubs. This includes cyphers and coding, gardening and drama. Pupils take part in a range of sports from curling to swimming. They compete against other schools in the trust or beyond. Older pupils take on leadership roles as house captains and school councillors. They organise fundraising events and choose books for the library. They contribute to the life of the school through a carefully planned helpers rota. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum is well planned. It is supplemented by a carefully thought-out programme of assemblies. Pupils learn about issues such as consent, peer pressure, online safety and diversity. They are extremely well-prepared for life in modern Britain.

Trust and school leaders are determined to provide the best possible experiences for pupils. They prioritise staff development and well-being. Consequently, staff morale is high. There is a strong team spirit. This includes governors, who understand their role. They use it effectively to challenge leaders and support the school to realise its ambitious goals. Parents' view of the school is overwhelmingly positive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	140075
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10288526
Type of school	First
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	62
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ilona Bond
Principal	Debbie Randall
Website	www.gravenhurstacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Bedfordshire Schools Trust.
- The principal took up her post in September 2017.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- Gravenhurst Academy converted to become an academy in September 2013. When its predecessor school, Gravenhurst Lower School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.

Information about this inspection

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

- 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 met with a range of leaders, including trust leaders, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) governors, including the chair of governors, trustees, including the chair of trustees, the chief executive officer and chief operating officer of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and spoke with some pupils about their learning. Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to several pupils read to a familiar adult. She also met with the history subject leader and looked at samples of pupils' work in history.
- 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 a range of school documentation and policies. These included the school development plan and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors reviewed the responses to Ofsted's parent and staff questionnaires. They also spoke with pupils, parents and staff to gather their views of the school.

Inspection team

Caroline Crozier, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Carley Holliman

Ofsted Inspector

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