

Inspection of Bridge Academy

Jonathans, Coffee Hall, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK6 5DE

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 June 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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| The quality of education | Good |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Good |
| Personal development | Good |
| Leadership and management | Good |
| Sixth-form provision | Outstanding |
| Previous inspection grade | Good |

The principal of this school is Bev Wise. This school is part of the Stephenson (MK) Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Kathie Hughes, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jo-Anne Hoarty.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils value the support and education that this school provides. Many pupils have complex needs and are often here for short periods of time. Staff rapidly build positive and trusting relationships with pupils. While some pupils still find it hard to be part of school life, they know that adults care and want the best for them. As pupils are so well known by adults, they have support in place which meets their needs precisely.

The school has ambitious and high expectations for pupils. Pupils, especially those further on in their journey here, strive to meet the expectations that adults have for them. The support pupils receive from adults is effective in helping them to achieve their best. Pupils are encouraged to think about their strengths and the goals they have. Consequently, they gain the self-belief that helps them to make plans for their futures.

During social times, pupils interact with each other and staff respectfully. They follow the routines and rules of the school well. Pupils show respect for the school environment and others. Sometimes, pupils find it hard to regulate their emotions. When this does happen, staff support them well with sensitivity and skill.

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

The school has an ambitious curriculum. When pupils first arrive, information from assessments is reviewed to find out what pupils' gaps in knowledge are. The school then carefully identifies and maps out the small steps in knowledge that pupils will be taught, and in what order. Subsequently, pupils achieve well during their time here. This is most evident in the sixth form, where students successfully complete very well-designed programmes of study. Students value the mentoring and support they receive from staff as well as the rich set of study options on offer to them. Students are well prepared with the knowledge and skills they need for their next stage.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), have their needs quickly identified. They have well-matched support profiles which give staff strategies to meet individual needs. Staff know the needs of pupils with SEND and consistently support them very well. There is also effective support for those pupils who have fallen behind in their reading. Staff have been well trained to spot when pupils may need help to learn to read.

Staff have secure knowledge of what they are teaching. They teach sequences of lessons which help pupils to build knowledge over time. In a small number of subjects, lesson activities are sometimes not as well matched as they could be. This means that in these lessons, pupils are not always learning as well as they could.

Absence and persistent absence are too high. Pupils sometimes do not benefit from what the school offers because of this. Improving pupils' attendance is a very high

priority for the school. The school is meticulous in its analysis of all absence. Effective measures have been put in place that have reduced the levels of absence for individual pupils. The school knows there is more work to do. Strategies are being refined to further increase the attendance of greater numbers of pupils.

This is an inclusive school where staff are knowledgeable about the complex needs that pupils have. Staff are calm and positive in their interactions with pupils. They have been well trained in the school's behaviour management approach. Staff are consistent in using these strategies. Consequently, when there is lesson disruption, staff defuse the situation well. As a result, the impact on the learning of other pupils is minimal.

The school has prioritised pupils' personal development. From Year 7 to sixth form, pupils are given a range of wider opportunities beyond the classroom. These are well-considered activities designed to fulfil pupils' personal and life skills targets. The school also provides pupils with opportunities to discuss important topics in society. This includes learning about different beliefs and traditions. Pupils do this well and learn to listen to and respect the views of others. There is a robust careers programme in place. All pupils learn about different education, training and employment options. Work experience, careers interviews and key worker guidance all help pupils' preparation for adulthood.

Staff are proud to work at this school. They are inspired by the new vision that the school has. They are clear that while change has led to an increase in workload, this has been necessary to ensure the best for the pupils who attend here. Trustees and governors work strategically with school leaders to ensure that pupils and their families have the support they need.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Absence and persistent absence across the school are too high. This means some pupils do not fully benefit from all that the school has to offer. The school should now carefully consider what additional strategies and support these families need to further improve attendance.
- Sometimes, learning activities do not always reflect the ambitious knowledge set out in the school curriculum. As a result, not all pupils learn as well as they could through the whole curriculum. The school needs to ensure that staff have the knowledge they need to plan precise and purposeful activities that will help pupils build knowledge.

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

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| Unique reference number | 140252 |
| Local authority | Milton Keynes |
| Inspection number | 10296393 |
| Type of school | Alternative provision |
| School category | Academy alternative provision converter |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 220 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 16 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Jo-Anne Hoarty |
| CEO of the trust | Kathie Hughes |
| Principal | Bev Wise |
| Website | www.bridgeacademy.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 7 February 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Bridge Academy is part of the Stephenson (MK) Trust. It is an academy alternative provision for pupils who are at risk of exclusion or who have been permanently excluded from other schools.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school operates from two sites.
- 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 education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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.
- The inspectors met with the principal and other members of the leadership team. They also met with the chair of the governing body.
- The lead inspector also met with the CEO of the trust and chair of the board of trustees.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, vocational studies and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also discussed the wider curriculum offer for pupils, with school leaders and looked at further examples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons. They also spoke to pupils in lessons and during breaks and lunchtimes.
- The inspectors considered a range of documents, including leaders' evaluations of the school, their school improvement plan, and minutes from governor and trustee meetings.
- The inspectors considered parent responses to Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspectors took account of the views of staff through conversations and the responses to the online staff survey.
- 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.

Inspection team

Nina Marabese, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Zoe Enser

His Majesty's Inspector

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