

Inspection of Marston Vale Middle School

The Crescent, Stewartby, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK43 9NH

Inspection dates:	8 and 9 October 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Jeremy Heath. This school is part of Chiltern Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Adrian Rogers, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Graham Pryor.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a warm and caring school where pupils are happy and feel safe. The school welcomes and accepts others, whatever their background. There are respectful relationships between pupils of all ages and between pupils and adults. Pupils enjoy and celebrate the recognition they receive through being a 'marvellous Marston'.

Pupils behave well. They demonstrate the school values of 'ready, respectful, responsible'. They understand how these help them to become responsible and kind citizens. For example, in lessons, they are ready to learn and focus on their learning. They show politeness and respect around school such as by routinely holding doors open.

The culture of high expectations extends to pupils' academic success. Pupils learn an improved curriculum, which is helping them to know and remember more. As a result, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), talk confidently and enthusiastically about what they have learned.

Pupils eagerly take on leadership roles from the increasing range of opportunities that are on offer. This helps to ensure their voice is heard. Peer mentors articulate how their training has helped them listen to, and help, younger pupils joining the school.

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

The school's curriculum is ambitious for all pupils, including pupils with SEND. It clearly sets out what pupils should learn and when they should learn it. A focus on specific aspects of learning, for example developing subject-specific vocabulary, helps pupils to learn well across every subject. This provides pupils with a secure grasp of important words that they use in discussions and in their well-presented written work.

Staff use their strong subject knowledge to teach the curriculum well. They select appropriate resources to present learning clearly. This aids pupils to make connections with what they already know. Personalised plans for pupils with SEND help remove barriers to learning.

Staff regularly check what pupils know. When pupils' knowledge is not secure, staff adapt their teaching to help close gaps quickly. As a result, pupils make progress through the curriculum. The school has put steps in place to improve on the 2023 Year 6 outcomes, such as training staff to develop their expertise and the redesigning of some curriculum content. These steps have helped pupils to know and remember more. However, in a few subjects, such as mathematics, while pupils remember the important information set out in the curriculum, they are less able to apply their knowledge to unfamiliar situations. This means that they are not yet achieving as highly as they should.

The school has prioritised reading across the curriculum through building a strong reading culture among staff. Pupils demonstrate a love of reading. Fluency lessons support all pupils to improve their reading skills. High-quality texts develop pupils' knowledge about different cultures and backgrounds and widen their vocabulary. The school identifies

pupils who struggle to read well. Leaders use this information to provide targeted support in areas such as phonics, fluency and comprehension. Pupils become confident readers.

Pupils are calm around the school and demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. They attend school regularly. The school's provision for personal development is strong. Assemblies and pastoral time give pupils opportunities to understand aspects such as life in modern Britain and healthy relationships. Pupils have a secure understanding of how to stay safe both online and in their local context, for example staying safe around water and around railway lines.

There is an extensive programme of clubs, which most pupils engage with. Head pupils, house captains, subject ambassadors and peer mentors make meaningful contributions to school life. Pupils develop their confidence and leadership skills in these valued roles.

The school has brought about rapid improvement since the last Ofsted inspection, while being mindful of staff's workload and well-being. Staff feel valued through the opportunities that are available to them to develop professionally. They are 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)

- In a few subjects, for example mathematics, the curriculum and teaching have not ensured that pupils have the confidence to apply their knowledge to unfamiliar contexts. As a result, pupils are not yet making as much progress as they should. The school should ensure that it continues to develop opportunities across the curriculum to help pupils become more fluent in applying their knowledge and to improve outcomes at the end of key stage 2 and beyond.

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	145861
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10345505
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	585
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Graham Pryor
CEO of the trust	Adrian Rogers
Headteacher	Jeremy Heath
Website	www.marstonvalemiddle.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	7 and 8 June 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The new interim headteacher took up post in June 2024.
- The number of pupils on roll has increased since the last inspection.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- 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. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, design and technology, physical education and history. 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 visited lessons in some other subjects, including computing and modern foreign languages.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other leaders responsible for behaviour and attendance, inclusion and pupils' wider development. They also met with members of the local governing body and representatives from the trust.
- 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 documents, including behaviour logs, attendance records, pupil records, records of governing body meetings, school development plans and school self-evaluation documents.
- Inspectors spoke with a wide range of pupils to understand what it is like to be a pupil in this school and reviewed five responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.
- Inspectors met with members of staff to discuss the school's work and considered the 24 responses to the confidential Ofsted online staff survey. To consider the views of parents, inspectors reviewed 119 responses and 75 free-text comments submitted to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Wayne Jarvis, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Warburton	Ofsted Inspector
James Shapland	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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