

Inspection of a good school: Woodland Middle School Academy

Malham Close, Flitwick, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK45 1NP

Inspection dates:

16 and 17 May 2023

Outcome

Woodland Middle School Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and confident at school. They feel safe, attend well and arrive promptly. They are focused and industrious in lessons. They are considerate of others as they move calmly around the site. They treat each other with respect and kindness.

Pupils are proud of their 'values-based' school. They can talk about the 22 values which shape their behaviour. These values help make the school a supportive and inclusive community. If bullying does occur, pupils know that teachers will work patiently with all those involved to stop it from recurring.

Learning is planned with high expectations of what pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), will be able to learn and understand. Pupils know that teachers make them work hard but will support them well at every stage of their learning.

Pupils have wonderful opportunities to contribute to their school. They are inspired by the wide range of high-quality clubs and societies they regularly attend.

Pupils enjoy the time they get to read alongside their teachers at the start of every day. Teachers make sure that pupils read books which interest them and improve their reading skills.

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

The curriculum is well planned. Leaders have thought carefully about the order in which topics are taught and how they link together to ensure the knowledge pupils learn builds upon prior learning. Leaders have high expectations of what pupils can learn. Teachers make sure pupils know and remember the curriculum content securely.

Teachers are experts in their subjects and undertake further training to develop their knowledge and skills. Sometimes subject leaders do not get enough guidance and opportunity to find out how well teachers are delivering the curriculum. This means they

do not always know if teachers are doing things in the intended way or to the same standard as leaders would expect.

Leaders carefully identify those pupils who are behind with their reading. Teachers use a range of well-judged strategies to help pupils catch up. Teachers check how well these approaches are working. This contributes to a hugely positive culture of reading in the school as a whole.

Teachers make sure that pupils use the planned subject-specific vocabulary accurately across the curriculum areas. However, the curriculum content does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their English skills routinely enough. For example, pupils do not have the chance to practise planning and structuring extended pieces of writing in curriculum subjects outside of English.

Pupils with SEND are well supported and their needs are accurately identified. Teachers know the most effective strategies to support pupils to successfully access the curriculum. Teaching assistants help pupils with SEND effectively to work independently, and this helps them remember the knowledge and skills they need to keep up with their peers. 'The Maple' is a welcoming space where pupils with SEND can get extra help, play games or simply stroke the school dog. These opportunities help pupils to continue their learning calmly outside the classroom.

Leaders help pupils become responsible members of the community through many additional leadership opportunities, including as sports leaders and friendship ambassadors. Working alongside the school council is the pupil 'neurodiversity council'. This recently suggested changes which have helped the movement of vulnerable pupils through the corridors.

All pupils take part in trips which leaders choose to connect to different school subjects. For example, Year 7 pupils visit Normandy and this helps their understanding of history, geography and French. Leaders think carefully about the range of clubs, societies and teams they offer. They successfully support the interests of all pupils, including pupils with SEND.

Relationships between teachers and pupils are positive. It is very unusual for poor behaviour to get in the way of learning. When it does, teachers use consistent approaches to stop it from getting worse or being repeated. Most pupils develop very constructive attitudes to their lessons.

Staff feel very well supported by leaders at all levels. Leaders listen carefully to what staff tell them about their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure staff are well trained and kept informed about the risks pupils face. Staff know how to spot the signs that pupils may be at risk of harm and report their concerns

rapidly. Leaders ensure that pupils receive appropriate support in a timely way, including when needed from outside agencies.

The thorough system of record-keeping enables staff to take shared responsibility for keeping all vulnerable pupils safe. Staff within the safeguarding team are tenacious in ensuring that all pupils get the help they need quickly.

Pupils learn through the curriculum how to make safe choices outside school, including online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Subject leaders are not consistently given the opportunities or guidance they need to find out how well teachers are delivering the curriculum. This means that they are not always clear on how well their curriculum area is being implemented by teachers. This leads to some variability in standards between teachers. Leaders should ensure that subject leaders have the capacity and training to evaluate standards rigorously within their own departmental area to ensure pupils achieve well throughout the curriculum.
- The curriculum content does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to practise planning and structuring extended pieces of writing in other areas of the curriculum aside from English. As a result, pupils do not consistently develop the knowledge and skills they need to successfully apply their English skills. Subject leaders should develop and include a range of opportunities that ensure pupils have the opportunity to practise using their learned English skills in all curriculum areas.

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 May 2017.

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

Unique reference number	136560
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10255162
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	706
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Catherine Baker
Headteacher	Jeff Conquest
Website	www.woodlandacademy.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	17 and 18 May 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Woodland Middle School Academy is a single-academy trust. The school uses one registered and one unregistered alternative provision.
- 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

- 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 this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, two deputy headteachers, the assistant headteacher and the school business manager.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the trust and four other members of the trust board.
- Deep dives were carried out in English, mathematics, geography and design technology. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils

about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects. They spoke to the special educational needs coordinator and pastoral leaders.
- Inspectors evaluated the information available on the school's website, including school policies, curriculum plans and information available for parents.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead to discuss the arrangements in place to safeguard all members of the school community. The checks leaders make on the suitability of staff were scrutinised, and records were checked.
- Inspectors reviewed records of behaviour, including incidents of bullying. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes.
- The inspectors reviewed 257 responses to Ofsted Parent View. They also reviewed the 254 free-text comments parents submitted during the inspection. The inspectors considered 69 responses to the staff survey and 54 responses to the pupil survey. Additionally, inspectors met with members of staff and spoke with pupils to gather their views of the school.

Inspection team

Paul Lawrence, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jennifer Brassington

Ofsted Inspector

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