

Alameda Middle School

Station Road, Ampthill, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK45 2QR

Inspection dates

27–28 February 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors ensure that all adults are suitable to work with pupils. They have an effective system to ensure that recruitment processes for staff are complete, checked and reported to governors.
- Teaching, learning and assessment in the school are good and continue to improve as the result of a strongly focused programme of professional development for teachers and support staff.
- Leadership and teaching in English are consistently strong. There are effective systems for checking how well pupils are learning in lessons, and as a result the quality of pupils' work in books is high.
- Leaders ensure that teaching in mathematics continues to improve rapidly, with a clear focus on pupils explaining what they are doing and knowing how to improve.
- Leaders are now making sure that teaching in science is improving. They are also making more accurate checks on how well pupils are doing in science.
- Pupils work well in lessons and say they enjoy most subjects, particularly English, mathematics, history, geography, design technology (DT), art, music and physical education (PE).
- Pupils speak highly of the opportunities they have in sports, arts, music and other clubs outside lessons.
- Pupils behave maturely at breaks, lunchtimes, in the dining hall and when moving around the school.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They wear their uniforms with pride and are keen to take on roles such as prefects in Year 8. They understand the need for and keep school rules.
- The school has an effective emphasis on 'values' through a taught programme and other activities and assemblies. This contributes to the positive attitudes that pupils display towards their learning in most lessons.
- Pupils make better progress in Years 7 and 8 but their slower progress in Years 5 and 6, along with a history of poorer outcomes in science, and for the most able in mathematics, means that the overall outcomes for pupils require improvement.
- Teaching is less effective in science and in modern foreign languages. In these lessons pupils are not always focused on their work and therefore their progress is slower.
- While the presentation to governors of information about how well pupils are doing improved last term, this is not yet fully in place.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that outcomes for the most able pupils by the end of key stage 2 are at least in line with national averages for the proportion of pupils reaching the 'high' national standard, especially in mathematics.
- Accelerate the rate of improvements in teaching in science to eradicate the history of previous weaker teaching and so improve outcomes in science.
- Leaders and governors should continue to improve the quality of the monitoring and checks they do by making sure that information about how well pupils are doing:
 - is presented in a consistent format so that improvements can be seen over time
 - shows how well pupils are doing from each starting point (low, middle and high ability from key stage 1)
 - matches with the work seen in pupils' books and the quality of learning by pupils in class.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Recent changes to leadership and other longer-term actions have strengthened the impact of leadership and governors since the previous inspection. Leaders and governors have focused on ensuring that vetting and checks on staff have been completed and are all recorded.
- Rapid and consistent improvements have been made in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across a wide range of subjects and year groups. This has been done through a coherent programme of professional development and support in the school.
- Middle leaders are consistently strong across a wide range of subjects. This is most noteworthy in English, mathematics, DT and humanities. In these subjects, leaders consistently make sure that pupils are learning the right things and that teaching approaches are effective, and make checks on the quality of work in pupils' books.
- Leaders are supporting teachers effectively to improve. For example, leaders are working closely to secure better science provision. This is now starting to result in more rapid improvements in the teaching of science. The school acknowledges that the pace of this improvement has been too slow in the past.
- Pupils, especially in key stage 2, benefit from specialist teaching and facilities, particularly in DT, art, music and PE. Pupils speak highly of the wide range of clubs and activities that add to the taught curriculum. Along with a strong emphasis on values, these aspects mean that the curriculum overall is a strength of the school.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils who need to catch up in Year 7 is used well and there is clear impact on the outcomes for these pupils. The evaluation of the use of PE and sports funding is of a high quality.
- New staff to the school and teachers new to the teaching profession spoke positively about the induction, training and support that they receive. Staff who spoke to inspectors one-to-one following visits to lessons and other leaders who met with inspectors were positive about how well the school was helping them improve their teaching.
- The school has increased its level of scrutiny and challenge through bringing in a new school improvement partner. Senior leaders and governors have strengthened their practice in how assessment information is used within the school and reported to governors, and are now sharper in their processes for setting targets.
- While improved formats for presenting information to governors about how well pupils are doing were introduced last term, leaders do not yet have a consistently coherent view of the progress pupils make over time, in all year groups and in all subjects. The school uses many different types of assessments for different purposes and presents the information within the school and to governors in a number of different formats.

Governance of the school

- Following the previous inspection, governors have ensured that systems for checking that policies are kept up to date and published on the website have improved. As a result, a number of policies, such as the behaviour policy and the equalities policy, and the evaluation of impact of the PE and sports premium funding are of a high quality.
- Governors have challenged school leaders to improve the clarity, consistency and accuracy of the information about how well pupils are doing in the school. As a result, these reports improved last term but are not fully in place.
- Governors understand that ensuring that leaders check on the progress all groups of pupils are making and reporting this to governors are key. Governors have more strategically assigned roles and visits to the school are better timetabled and structured. The impact of this can be seen in governor visit reports and in the more searching questions governors feel able to ask as they now know more about the school from their visits.
- Although governors know there is still much more to do to raise standards further at Alameda, they have attended appropriate training and apply it to their work. This is successfully improving their effectiveness.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors have focused intensively on addressing the areas for improvement from the previous inspection linked to vetting and recording checks on staff and staff recruitment. In a short time, leaders and governors have brought about the changes needed. As a result, there is now a clear system in place that is meticulously and routinely checked.
- Pupils, parents and staff overwhelmingly agree that pupils feel safe in school. Pupils confidently report that there is nowhere they feel they cannot go in school. Pupils negotiate a difficult site, with many separate buildings and a sloping setting, sensibly. Pupils understand the need for the door pass system and how it works, and Year 8 pupils acting as prefects provide additional guidance to their peers at breaks and lunchtimes.
- All staff are clear about their duty to keep pupils safe. All the required training is up to date. Clear systems are in place for checking on vulnerable pupils, tracking the actions taken and identifying the next steps needed. There are suitable systems in place for recording incidents and ensuring that they are followed up.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is consistently strong in all years and for all groups of pupils in most subjects. This stems from the effective use of subject specialists in all year groups and the use of consistent approaches to planning and teaching that provide continuity for the pupils as they move between teachers during the day.

- Lessons are characterised by strong and consistent routines and positive relationships between staff and pupils. Lessons have clear learning outcomes and work that is well matched to pupils of different abilities. As a result, time is used well, and in most subjects pupils produce high-quality work.
- Teachers show good subject knowledge and plan teaching that builds up knowledge, skills and understanding within a lesson and over time. Teachers use questioning well, along with directly checking pupils' work, so that they are able to adjust their teaching during the lesson. In a few cases, teachers did not then recheck pupils' understanding sufficiently thoroughly.
- The development of reading, writing, communication and mathematics across the curriculum is a strength in the school. Communication, particularly pupils' ability to explain their thinking, is central to the school's approach to teaching. Pupils enjoy reading and inspectors saw high-quality development of reading in the library, which is well used, and in listening to pupils read.
- The improvements made in the teaching and assessment of writing are seen in the improved outcomes for pupils compared to national averages at the end of key stage 2 in 2017. Particularly successful is the improvement in the proportion of all pupils, and also the most able pupils, who reached the national standard for 'greater depth' in writing. These improvements were clear in the pupils' work now they are in Year 7.
- Pupils learn well in mathematics, as a result of a strong and consistent approach to the teaching of understanding and reasoning. Pupils are expected to explain their thinking out loud so that correct processes and methods are reinforced, and any misconceptions show-up and can be addressed by the teacher. While improving, not enough pupils and especially the most able pupils attain the national 'high' standard in mathematics at the end of key stage 2. This is reflected in the lessons and work seen for the most able in mathematics in Year 7. Work for the most able in Year 8 is much more demanding and so pupils reach the high standards expected by the end of Year 8.
- Teaching assistants are generally deployed well and make a positive contribution to the learning of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. They move around the room well, even when mainly supporting pupils with significant needs. Teaching assistants are proactive, picking up on key pupils but also moving on to other pupils. This fosters the positive attitudes to learning that are at the heart of the school's approach. On a few occasions when whole-class teaching was less successful, teaching assistants were less effective, mainly in being left standing or sitting for too long.
- The overall effectiveness of teaching and learning stems from the high-quality training and support that teachers receive from senior and particularly middle leaders. Where aspects of subject leadership are not as strong, teaching, while improving, is weaker, as in science, modern foreign languages and for the most able in Year 7 in mathematics.
- A quarter of the parents who responded on the Ofsted online survey were concerned about the information they receive from the school about their child. This is also reflected in the lack of clarity in reporting overall outcomes to governors and in the challenges raised by the new school improvement partner over target setting and checking the accuracy of some assessment outcomes, particularly in science.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Over 90% of pupils, staff and parents who responded to Ofsted online surveys said that pupils feel safe in school. A comment from one parent sums up what inspectors found: 'My child feels safe, secure and nurtured at this school. There is the right balance between pastoral care and encouraging independence.'
- The school has an effective emphasis on 'values'. The value of the month during the inspection was 'friendship' and pupils were able to give practical examples of what good friends do following an assembly on this theme.
- Pupils take care and look out for one another. One boy who had had a bump on the head on the first day of the inspection and gone home, was helped by his peers to catch up on a lesson he had missed the day before.
- The school has an effective teaching programme for personal, social and health education. In a lesson on the influence of peer pressure on pupils' choices, pupils were interested and engaged and discussed and considered different scenarios, and skilful questioning by the teacher enabled pupils to develop thoughtful and mature responses.
- Most pupils say they enjoy coming to school and most parents say their child is happy at the school. This is reflected in pupils' attendance, which is broadly average for Years 5 to 8. Persistent absence has fallen so far this year. While persistent absence rose in 2016/17, it was still below average for Years 5 to 8. The attendance of boys and particularly pupil premium pupils has continued to improve this year.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Most pupils and parents and all staff felt the school dealt effectively with bullying. Pupils were clear about what constituted bullying and the different forms it could take. Pupils were clear about who they could go to, and there are high levels of trust that the adults in the school will respond effectively.
- A very large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey Parent View, felt the school makes sure its pupils are well behaved. Pupils and staff who spoke to inspectors were similarly positive. Pupils understand the school's behaviour code and how it is used; they felt it is used consistently and fairly. However, some staff who responded to the online survey were less positive, feeling that behaviour is not dealt with by school leaders and that staff are not supported.
- Despite it snowing on both days of the inspection, pupils behaved maturely when moving around outside the school, at breaks and lunchtimes and in corridors. The Year 8 pupils spoken to, and observed going about their duties, are proud to be prefects and are good role models for their peers.

- Almost all lessons were characterised by good relationships between pupils and teachers. School records show that behaviour incidents, including racist incidents and bullying, are recorded and followed up. The number of incidents is low. Pupils could explain to inspectors what happened if you behaved well and if you did not. Inspectors saw examples of positive rewards in lessons, and the only incidents of poorer behaviour in lessons were seen when teaching was less effective, for example in science and modern foreign languages.
- Fixed-term exclusions rose slightly in 2015/16, as did the number of pupils who had a repeated exclusion, but these fell in 2016/17 and have remained very low this year and with no repeats. The school has an internal isolation process, which pupils understand and is contributing to the low rates of pupils being excluded.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils do not do well enough by the end of key stage 2. Although pupils make better progress in Years 7 and 8, weaker progress in science and the progress of the most able in mathematics, mean that outcomes for pupils require improvement.
- The school has strong systems for ensuring that pupils transfer successfully to the upper school. As a result of these systems and the stronger progress pupils make in Years 7 and 8, pupils are prepared sufficiently for the next stage in their education.
- Pupils who enter the school with skills and knowledge below that of their peers, those who have SEN and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils make good progress. This is because of the strong systems of care and support that the school has in place, including the deployment of additional adults in the classrooms.
- Pupils in the school are above national average on most measures by the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2016 and 2017, pupils were below the national figures for the proportion of pupils reaching the high standard in mathematics. These are the current Year 8 and Year 7 pupils respectively in the school. Scrutiny of pupils' current work shows that the most able Year 8 pupils are now achieving in line with where they should be. However, in Year 7 the most able pupils are not achieving the highest standards of which they are capable.
- The school tests pupils on entry in Year 5 and uses the results as evidence of the pupils' starting points. The school understands the need to improve progress in Years 5 and 6 so that more pupils reach the 'high' national standard. Mathematics leaders across the middle and lower schools are now meeting to improve these arrangements and the agreement of standards at this vital cross-over.
- Outcomes in science are well below that of other subjects. This is due to a previous legacy of poor teaching and leadership in science. While improvements in this are being moved forward effectively by a new senior leader role, leaders are aware that the pace of this improvement needs to increase.

School details

Unique reference number	137249
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10043664

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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	694
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Co-Chairs (acting)	Alex Jefferson and Julia Rooney
Headteacher	Maxine Warner
Telephone number	01525 750900
Website	www.alamedamiddleschool.org.uk/
Email address	mwarner@alamedamiddleschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 July 2017

Information about this school

- The school converted to an academy in 2011.
- The school collaborates with a 'pyramid' of local schools. This includes six lower schools, one other middle school and one upper school.
- The school is a middle deemed secondary school and has pupils from Year 5 to Year 8. It has six forms of entry in each year.
- The proportion of pupils who have English as an additional language is well below average.
- About 10% of pupils in the school are disadvantaged, which is well below average.
- A very small number of pupils attend alternative provision at The Academy of Central Bedfordshire, Houghton Regis.

Information about this inspection

- Three inspectors were on site for two days, with one extra inspector for the first day of the inspection. In addition, an HMI was on site for the second day, for quality assurance of the inspection.
- Inspectors made observations of teaching during 41 visits to classrooms. Inspectors also looked at pupils' work and talked to pupils about what they were learning in that lesson. In addition, inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work in English, mathematics and science.
- Inspectors talked to three groups of pupils chosen by the inspectors from a lesson they had just visited. Inspectors also talked to three further groups of pupils during lunchtime in the dining hall.
- Inspectors visited one assembly, one afternoon registration and two form times and listened to pupils read in form time.
- In following up on the areas for improvement from the last inspection, meetings were held with the lead for safeguarding and others involved in safeguarding, with leaders and governors responsible for making sure the school website is kept up to date and with the senior leader who monitors the improvements that the subject leaders are making in science.
- In addition to the above, meetings were also held with subject leaders for English, mathematics, science and humanities. Meetings were also held about the school's assessment data and outcomes for pupils, about the provision and outcomes for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and about the leadership and management of teaching, learning and assessment.
- A meeting was held with the two governors who have been acting co-chairs since January 2018. Another meeting was held with the school's improvement partner who started providing advice to the school in November 2017 and is a local headteacher.
- A total of 285 parents responded to the Ofsted parents' survey, 50 members of staff responded to the Ofsted staff survey and 100 pupils responded to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Anne Pepper, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Phillip Barr	Ofsted Inspector
John Wilson	Ofsted Inspector
John Craig	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2018