

Inspection of a good school: Buckingham School

London Road, Buckingham, Buckinghamshire MK18 1AT

Inspection dates:

3–4 March 2020

Outcome

Buckingham School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that one or more areas may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils learn a broad range of subjects and in most of them learning is organised so that pupils build knowledge and skills in a logical order. However, this is not consistent across all subjects and over time, teaching has not successfully built on previous learning. Consequently, pupils do not achieve as well as they should in some subjects.

Teachers know the pupils well but sometimes they do not expect enough of them, especially of those who did particularly well in their primary schools.

Pupils, parents and staff recognise that other areas of the school have improved since the headteacher arrived two years ago. Pupils feel safe and are confident that bullying is not tolerated. We noticed the mature way that pupils conduct themselves around the school. Lessons have a calm atmosphere and are rarely interrupted by pupils' behaving inappropriately. Pupils are respectful of staff, one another and visitors.

Teachers support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. They use the clear guidance provided by the team of experts.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum extends beyond the subjects pupils must learn. Pupils believe that the timetabled enrichment programme provides them with unique experiences and opportunities to develop their cultural awareness and think about the world differently.

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

Senior leaders have clear intentions for what they want pupils to know and be able to do by the time they leave the school. They share their vision and values that underpin the school's curriculum. Leaders are committed to pupils studying a broad range of subjects for three years before choosing their options for GCSE and vocational courses. Leaders

have ended the arrangement which existed over the last few of a shortened key stage 3 that was introduced by previous leaders.

In recent years, pupils have not achieved well enough in most subjects, including in their examinations at the end of Year 11. Leaders have begun to identify and address the reasons for this. Leaders are now clearer about what they expect to see in the curriculum and the classroom.

Some curriculum leaders have sequenced their subject plans so that all teachers know what knowledge and skills should be learned and when. New and detailed plans are well developed in mathematics and French, but at a very early stage in English as the curriculum leader is new to the school. Teachers use information from assessment well to identify where pupils have gaps in their knowledge. However, they are not consistently successful in planning activities in lessons which enable pupils to reinforce what they already know, or to build securely on it. This prevents some pupils from enjoying their learning as they move on to new topics without fully embedding what was taught.

The progress of pupils with SEND is monitored by the specialist team. These pupils do well and are effectively supported by teaching assistants with subject expertise. Similarly, teachers are meeting the needs of disadvantaged pupils well. There is now little difference between the achievements of disadvantaged pupils and their peers.

Leaders have introduced a new behaviour management policy that has led to lessons becoming disruption-free. Across the school pupils work together to guide and support their peers. This reflects the school's values of trust and respect well. Pupils are keen to learn and engage quickly with the tasks set.

Leaders have reduced teachers' workload by adjusting assessment schedules and restricting communication between staff after hours. A staff well-being group is looking at ways to further support staff by, for example, changing the approach to training. A large proportion of staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire told us that they enjoy working at the school.

Leaders have created a strong sixth-form curriculum that provides progression for all students who continue studying at the school. A partnership with the local grammar school enables students to study some science A levels there if they are not available at this school. Students enjoy studying in the sixth form. They spoke to us very enthusiastically about the support and advice they receive to make the right choice beyond school, including work experience.

In discussion with the headteacher, we agreed that, all subjects having curriculum plans in place, ensuring that pupils are gaining and remembering knowledge and skills, and English may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Senior leaders and governors work together to ensure that pupils are safe in school. Leaders are vigilant in making the necessary checks when recruiting new staff. Staff receive the training they need to notice the signs that a pupil may require support and work well with external agencies to secure the support needed. Appropriate actions are taken to ensure that pupils are safe when working off site.

Pupils and sixth form students are taught to keep themselves safe in lessons, and through assemblies and visits from people with specialist knowledge. Pupils know how to avoid risks that can occur online and in their community.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers' plans to implement the curriculum are not yet well developed in all subjects across the curriculum. Leaders need to ensure that all subject plans are as good as those, for example, in mathematics and French, where the knowledge and skills pupils will learn are detailed and the subject content is now taught in a logical sequence.
- In some subjects teachers do not ensure that activities enable pupils to recall and build securely on what they know. In these cases, teachers need help to be able to do this more effectively, and in being able to check that pupils remember what they have been taught.
- Although pupils' attainment is beginning to improve, pupils' progress in a number of important subjects has been poor for the past three years. Leaders should ensure that teachers' expectations are high enough in all lessons to enable all pupils to achieve well and that disadvantaged pupils' gap in attainment continues towards being eradicated.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that standards may be declining then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 9–10 February 2016.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	110484
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10133157
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,055
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	110
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair of governing body	Matthew Watkins
Headteacher	Andrew McGinnes
Website	www.buckinghamschool.org
Date of previous inspection	9–10 February 2016

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up the post in January 2018.
- The school has increased the number of pupils on role, from 180 per year to 210 per year as the school has become more popular in the community.
- The school works with 'Aspire' in Aylesbury for the education of three pupils who require alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior and curriculum leaders, teachers, administrative staff and governors.
- The lead inspector had telephone conversations with a senior school improvement advisor from the local authority and the member of staff in charge of the alternative provision.

- We did deep dives in English, mathematics and French. As part of this within each subject, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, talked to pupils about their work, and met with teaching staff to discuss the school's approach to curriculum delivery.
- We reviewed safeguarding records, including the single central record of recruitment checks on staff. An inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to review the school's safeguarding arrangements.
- We observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. We spoke with pupils, formally and informally to discuss views about their school.
- We considered the views of 145 parents who responded to the online questionnaire Ofsted Parent View, including 142 free-text comments.
- We considered the views of 62 members of staff who responded to the staff survey and those of 202 pupils who completed the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Karen Roche, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

John Burridge

Ofsted Inspector

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