

Brooklands School

Brooklands Drive, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 3PF

Inspection dates 12–13 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students do well. Their progress is improving year on year in English, mathematics and science.
- Teaching is good and occasionally it is outstanding.
- Standards reached in Year 8 compare well with those seen nationally. In mathematics, standards are above average. In English, standards are average but rising quickly because of good teaching.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. They enjoy their time at the academy.
- Students feel safe because bullying is uncommon. Students say that any concerns they have are dealt with quickly and well.
- The headteacher provides strong leadership, ably supported by the senior leadership team. Staff morale is high. Regular checks on teaching quality make sure that it continues to improve.
- A measure of the academy's successful leadership, including that of the governing body, is seen in the students' good and improving achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small proportion of teaching requires improvement, and not enough is outstanding.
- Students do not have frequent opportunities to think for themselves. Some of the teaching does not involve students actively in their learning.
- The quality of marking and feedback to students in some subjects is not of a high enough standard.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 22 lessons, observing 14 teachers and some other adults. Four lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders. Inspectors watched students in the playground and around the academy, sampled their work and listened to some students in Years 5 and 7 read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors, and a group of students.
- The inspection team took account of 31 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and surveys carried by the academy itself of parents and students' views, and analysed questionnaires completed by 19 members of staff for this inspection.
- Inspectors looked at the academy's work and a range of documentation, including the academy's own analysis of its strengths and weaknesses and its improvement plan, and information about students' attainment and progress. They also looked at records relating to aspects of students' behaviour and safeguarding, and at teachers' planning.

Inspection team

Dilip Kadodwala, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Helen Storey

Her Majesty's Inspector

Stephen Palmer

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is smaller than the average-sized middle school. It converted to an academy on 1 November 2011. When its predecessor school, called Brooklands Middle School, was last inspected by Ofsted in June 2010, it was judged to be good.
- The vast majority of students come from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives pupil premium funding, which is additional government funding (in this case, for students known to be eligible for free school meals) is above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is well above the national average.
- The proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The academy does not make any use of any alternative off-site provision for students.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is always at least good and a greater proportion is outstanding by:
 - giving students frequent opportunities to work on their own and to think for themselves
 - providing more lessons that allow students to actively take part in their learning
 - making sure that in all subjects teachers give students good advice about improving their work, and follow it up to make sure they have responded.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When students join the academy in Year 5, their attainment is below average. They make good progress and leave in Year 8 with standards that are broadly average in English and above average in mathematics. Standards in English are rising quickly across all other year groups.
- The academy tracks students' progress well, and regularly checks the accuracy of the results by comparing assessment practices with other schools. Senior leaders are predicting that students currently in Year 6 should reach above-average standards in English and mathematics in the national tests in July. In lessons seen for this year group, students were making good progress in these subjects.
- Staff work well to develop students' skills in reading, writing and mathematics so they make good progress across a range of subjects and in all years. In Year 7, students' progress in mathematics is outstanding.
- Progress in reading and writing is good and rapidly improving because all staff follow the same approach. Students enjoy reading every day in a variety of lessons. Weekly half-hour sessions when students are heard reading by staff, including the headteacher, make a good contribution to their good and improving reading skills.
- Students develop and use their reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills well in a wide range of subjects. Also noteworthy is the use of these skills in the half-termly 'home study units' which have the added benefit of encouraging students to follow up their interests.
- Good or better teaching in science makes sure that students make consistently good progress across all year groups. Much of the teaching seen in this subject involved students being actively involved in learning and being made to think more deeply through carrying out investigations.
- Pupil premium funding is used to provide additional tuition in English and mathematics, for example, by a trained member of staff. It is also used for running a breakfast club which helps to make sure that students are ready to learn each morning.
- The academy supports 15 students through the Year 7 'catch-up' funding, which is additional funding to support students whose attainment is below the expected levels in English and mathematics. This funding is being used to provide one-to-one and small group tuition in English and mathematics. All of these students are making good progress in both subjects.
- The gap in attainment has narrowed substantially between students who are supported by pupil premium funding and other students, and they make the same good progress. In 2012, eligible students in Year 8 were on average around one term behind their classmates in English and mathematics. Leaders carefully analyse the impact of the range of support used to speed up the progress for this group of students.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to other students. This is because their needs are known well by their teachers and other adults, who provide tailored support, mostly in class but also individually and in small groups outside of class lessons as appropriate.

The quality of teaching is good

- Improving the quality of teaching has a high profile in the academy, and its own records rightly support inspectors' views that teaching is good overall. A very small proportion of teaching requires improvement and not enough of it is outstanding. None is inadequate.
 - Teachers' planning is good. Teachers typically have high expectations for what students can achieve and lessons are lively. Teachers make good use of the information gathered from checking students' progress to set work at the right level of difficulty, and this makes sure that students make good progress in their learning.
 - Occasionally, teaching is outstanding. Some students told inspectors that one of the things they liked best about the academy was that learning was fun, particularly in science. An example of this was seen in a Year 7 science lesson where students had to build a model of a circuit diagram. The teacher very expertly involved all students in thinking scientifically, progressively building on their knowledge and understanding through open-ended questions, practical tasks and role-play.
 - In practical lessons, such as physical education and food technology, students are given good opportunities to practise their skills in order to improve their performance. Checking their own and other students' learning is also an established part of good learning.
 - Teachers' questions are often searching and they make sure that all students have opportunities to express their ideas and develop their understanding. This was seen in a Year 6 English lesson, where students were drafting different segments of a story, working confidently in small groups.
 - Teaching that is consistently good routinely requires students to collaborate on tasks. For example, in a Year 8 art lesson students shared imaginative ideas which subsequently helped them to create their own work. This way of learning contributes well to students' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development because they work with others from different backgrounds and develop respect and consideration for each other's ideas. There are also suitable occasions in lessons for students to think about themselves, their beliefs and those of others.
 - Teachers and other adults provide good support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs. Those providing support are clear about exactly what students are expected to do and what successful learning should look like. They question, prompt and provide special resources when required, so enabling these students to work confidently by themselves and with other students.
 - The teaching of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills is established well in all subjects, in response to senior leaders' expectations about making sure that students leave the academy fit for the next stage of their education.
 - Teachers' marking is usually good, with detailed information about how well students perform, how to improve work and what the next steps in learning are. This is clear in most subjects, but not in all. Sometimes students do not follow up advice that is given.
 - As yet, not enough of the teaching is leading to exceptional achievement for students. This is because teachers occasionally talk for too long. Students do not learn as well as they could when teachers do not give them sufficient opportunities to think for themselves, work independently and be actively involved in the learning.
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The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students are enthusiastic about their academy. They behave well around the site and have good attitudes to learning. They are polite, personable and well mannered. Students are keen to learn, and when asked to work together, they do so without fuss.
- Relationships between students and adults in the academy are good and reflect a purposeful atmosphere for learning. Any disruption to learning in lessons is uncommon. The great majority of students exercise self-discipline, know right from wrong, and show consideration for the feelings of others. Staff use good procedures to manage students' behaviour when it falls short of the academy's expectations.
- Some parents who responded to Parent View did not think that the academy makes sure that behaviour is good. The inspectors discussed this fully with senior leaders and examined records of incidents of misbehaviour. The number of fixed-term exclusions has decreased and permanent exclusions are rare. The academy's own parental and student surveys are very positive about behaviour.
- Students are mature in their awareness of different types of bullying and can explain, for instance, the dangers of cyber-bullying. They are alert to the importance of equal treatment for all, whatever their social, ethnic, sexual or gender background.
- Students say that they feel safe at the academy, and they understand how to keep themselves safe from harm. Students were seen to be working safely in lessons visited by inspectors.
- Students attend regularly and are punctual at the start of the day and to lessons.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and other leaders are ambitious for the academy and they are supported by all staff, who are equally keen that students, whatever their backgrounds and abilities, should achieve their potential.
- The academy promotes equality of opportunity well and where there have been gaps in the progress of different groups of students, these have now narrowed significantly. This is because checks made on students' progress are sharp, and help and guidance are quickly provided where necessary.
- Leaders accurately identify the academy's strengths and weaknesses. Senior and subject leaders regularly check on the quality of students' work and the progress they are making. Leaders are single-minded and good at tackling shortcomings in management and teaching.
- Teachers are set targets for improving their work, and salary rises are dependent on how well responsibilities are carried out and how well students achieve. Teachers receive good advice on how they can improve their performance, supported by suitable training to help them.
- The academy has clear plans to tackle areas that still need to be improved, including increasing the amount of teaching that is good or better, so that students leave with consistently high standards and make excellent progress.

- The curriculum offers students a good balance of experiences in a wide range of subjects. It is adapted to meet students' needs, aspirations and interests. Planning across different themes and topics is well thought out and successful in bringing about good learning.
 - Many students are keen to take part in a wide range of out-of-school activities, visits to theatres, art galleries and museums. All these contribute well to students' academic and personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
 - Links with families are successful. The headteacher makes sure that either he or other leaders are available to listen to parental concerns and address them. Parental surveys carried out by the academy show a high degree of satisfaction with the academy, and all who responded on Parent View would recommend the academy to another parent.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body members bring a lot of experience to support the academy and to challenge it, so that it does not stand still or become complacent. Governors are active in the academy and have taken training so that their understanding of figures relating to students' achievement is good. Governors have good insights into the quality of teaching through their personal visits, meetings with subject leaders and frank reports provided by the headteacher. Governors have challenged leaders when improvements have not happened quickly enough and are committed to ensuring that the academy serves its community well. They make sure that resources are managed well. They are clear about what the pupil premium funding is spent on and how it is improving the achievement of the most vulnerable students. Governors make sure that the performance targets set for the headteacher are challenging and pay increases for teachers are based on their performance. They make sure that all their statutory duties, including those relating to safeguarding, are fulfilled.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137636
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	412105

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	286
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Myra Gray
Headteacher	Steven Harrington-Williams
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01525 372018
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