

# Robert Bloomfield Academy

Bloomfield Drive, Shefford, SG17 5BU

**Inspection dates** 25–26 June 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- Leadership is outstanding. The Principal and the strong team of senior leaders have high expectations of both teaching and students' achievement this has allowed them to create a vibrant and very successful academy.
- Teaching is consistently good and often outstanding, enabling most students to achieve exceptionally well and exceed expected progress.
- High aspiration is embedded across the academy. Work is suitably challenging and students are expected to write at length in all subjects.
- Students' books show that they respond well to the high level of challenge provided. Their work is well presented and of a high quality.
- Students have a thirst for knowledge and approach learning with real enthusiasm.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs are well supported with additional help to improve their reading and understanding, allowing them to catch up with their learning.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Students feel safe, free from bullying and enjoy their time at the academy. They are polite and courteous, work hard and are proud of their school.
- The academy offers its students an exciting range of subjects and enrichment choices, giving all students the opportunity to extend their education and to experience success.
- The Trust and governors provide very effective strategic support for the academy's leadership and make sure the academy has the resources it needs for it to continue to improve.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors undertook direct observations of teaching quality in 36 lessons, some of which were conducted jointly with senior leaders. In addition 11 other classes were visited to provide evidence of how teachers assess work and adapt resources to the different needs of students.
- A range of documents was analysed, including those relating to safeguarding, student progress, attendance, exclusions, the academy’s self-evaluation and development plan and its policies for managing teacher’s performance and improving teaching and learning.
- Students’ books and coursework, especially in English, were looked at closely.
- Inspectors took account of 94 responses to the online Parent View survey and 69 responses to the staff survey. Inspectors spoke to a parent on the phone and read 3 letters.
- Discussions were held with the Principal, other senior and subject leaders, several groups of students, a representative from the Bedfordshire East Multi Academies Trust and the Chair and members of the Governing Body.

## Inspection team

Lesley Daniel, Lead inspector	Seconded Inspector
Carol Worthington	Additional Inspector
Brenda Watson	Additional Inspector
Stephen Howland	Additional Inspector

*Lesley Daniel is appointed as an Additional Inspector, under the powers relating to additional inspectors, in paragraph 11 of Part 2 of Schedule 12 to the Education and Inspections Act 2006'*

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Robert Bloomfield converted to become an academy school in May 2011. When its predecessor school Robert Bloomfield Middle School was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The school is a larger than average middle school.
- The academy has a largely white British intake whose students have English as their first language.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and for students known to be eligible for free school meals, is below the national average. A small proportion of Year 7 students are eligible for 'catch up' funding.
- The number of students requiring extra help at school action and school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- The academy is a specialist Engineering and Languages Academy.
- The academy is part of the Bedfordshire East Multi-Academies Trust and a National Teaching School.
- The Principal of the academy is a National Leader of Education and the academy offers support to other local schools.
- The academy meets the government's floor targets for Key Stage 2, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate further the progress of all groups of students by:
  - ensuring that students always know what they need to do to improve their work so that they make the same outstanding progress in all subjects as they do in the most effective.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students enter the academy with above-average levels of prior attainment. Progress in all year groups subsequently is rapid and accelerating. Academy data shows that, over the four-year journey students make whilst in the academy, the overwhelming majority make at least expected levels of progress in both English and mathematics, with most making more than expected. Some make exceptional progress.
- In mathematics in particular, students' attainment in their Key Stage 2 tests is high and, by the time they leave the academy at the end of Year 8, a high proportion of them have achieved well above expected standards.
- The academy reacted to the disappointing Key Stage 2 English results in 2013 with determination and vigour, addressing both the cause and effect of students' low writing levels. All students who underachieved in their writing are now back on track and have made expected progress or are already ahead of expected levels of progress for the end of Year 7.
- This year's writing assessments at the end of Key Stage 2 show almost all students will have made expected levels of progress, with the number making more than expected progress well above national expectations. Attainment in writing across the academy is rising rapidly.
- The achievement of the majority of those students for whom the pupil premium provides support is in line with other pupils in the academy. Case studies show that some pupil premium students, who arrived in Year 5 with average attainment, have made outstanding progress.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make the same good progress as other students at the academy. These students are taught very effectively in small groups. The excellent support given to improving their reading enables them to take part confidently and successfully with other students in all areas of the curriculum.
- The high levels of expectation shown by teachers and the students themselves lead to high achievement and mean that all students are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Progress is recorded regularly and teachers know their students well and what they can achieve. As a result, higher-ability students are stretched and students' particular learning needs are quickly identified and addressed.
- The standard of reading and writing seen in lessons and in students' books was extremely high. This is partly due to the clear 'whole academy' approach to improving writing, where students are expected to write at length in all subjects including physical education. Year 7 'catch-up' funding is used successfully to boost the literacy of a small group of students at an annual summer school.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The quality of teaching is consistently good with much that is outstanding. The impact of this high quality teaching can be seen in the quality of students' work in their books, and in their positive attitudes towards learning. They arrive promptly for lessons, are orderly and respectful

and share excellent relationships with staff.

- Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subjects and this inspires students to want to learn. In mathematics, higher-ability students are given the opportunity in Year 8 to study at GCSE level and complete a mock exam, giving them extra challenge and preparing them well for the next stage of their education. The physical education department also offers students a chance to be assessed on their practical ability at GCSE level in Year 8.
- Teachers are well motivated and very used to sharing their outstanding practice with each other and visitors from other schools. They benefit from a wide variety of available training and many of them organise training activities for other schools and teachers.
- Where students make rapid progress, for example in English, mathematics and PE, they are given tasks which are matched closely to their personal targets. When students are given a choice of tasks, teachers guide them to choose the one set at the right level, making sure that they are challenged and so make progress. In two Year 7 PE lessons, on hurdling and the triple jump, activities were carefully adapted so that students of all abilities could develop their skills to the full.
- Teachers use their excellent questioning skills effectively and provide regular opportunities for students to discuss ideas with each other so that they learn new knowledge and skills very quickly. Students work well together in pairs and groups, getting on with tasks diligently and offering support to each other where necessary. In one Year 6 science lesson, higher-ability students were using the internet to research the features of specialised cells. They shared information and discussed complex ideas with confidence.
- Teachers' high quality marking contributes well to students' progress. In many subjects, for example, English and mathematics, detailed, written feedback is provided regularly and when appropriate, mini-targets are set to help students to improve their work. Marking is most effective when students are encouraged to respond to the comments made and make corrections to spellings and grammar. This helps to reinforce their learning because they understand their errors and are able to say for themselves what they need to do to improve. This outstanding practice is not seen consistently in all subject areas, however, so their progress elsewhere is not always as rapid as it is in English and mathematics.
- Homework is set regularly and is closely linked with classwork. In one Year 7 English class, students read out their 'spooky descriptions,' written for homework, to show their understanding of techniques such as personification, which they had learned in a previous lesson.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Around the building, behaviour is impeccable with students showing great consideration for each other, their teachers and other adults. Break times are calm and orderly and students treat facilities such as the dining hall respectfully and keep the academy free from litter. They wear their uniforms with pride.
- The success of the academy in promoting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its students is clearly demonstrated in the way the students behave. They regularly study cultures different to their own, celebrate a variety of cultural and religious events and reflect on their personal and social development in lessons and form time.
- Teachers are skilled at behaviour management and use the academy systems consistently to reinforce their expectations of students. This makes a positive contribution to the exceptionally

strong climate for learning. Academy records show how, with well-managed support, some students have been able to significantly improve their behaviour.

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students at the academy feel safe and know how to stay safe. They talked confidently on issues such as how to stay safe on the internet and when they were out alone. Many Year 8 students still remembered clearly a Year 5 trip to 'Hazard Alley', which had highlighted many areas where they could be unsafe, and confirmed that staff had taught them how to take care in those circumstances.
- Students also showed a mature understanding of what bullying is, as well as the different types of bullying and how they can affect people. Academy records show that little bullying happens at school but that when it does it is quickly dealt with. Students supported this saying that they were confident that teachers would take them seriously if they reported anything and take action to put things right. Parents also report that their children are safe and happy at the academy.
- Students' attendance has risen this year to above the national average and persistent absence is well below the national average. The academy has worked proactively with families to achieve this improvement.

## **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- The Principal's inspired leadership has been instrumental in creating a vibrant and extremely well organised school community which enables both staff and students to thrive. The academy's involvement with the Bedfordshire East Multi-Academies Trust, its own status as a Teaching School and the Principal's role as a National Leader in Education are all used very effectively to create opportunities for staff to develop professionally. This ability to retain key staff and recruit new teachers with ease strengthens the quality of teaching and learning within the academy.
- Senior leaders have an accurate picture of the academy's strengths and of the few areas which still require development. Their evaluation of the academy's performance leads directly to action, such as the measures taken to improve student's writing. There is no complacency within the leadership team which continuously strives to improve the experience of students at the academy.
- The leaders of teaching and learning aim consistently for excellence and high levels of achievement. The academy has clear arrangements to review the performance of teachers, to tackle under-performance and to reward those who teach effectively. Teaching continues to improve because of effective monitoring of standards, and leaders quickly challenge teachers who do not teach well enough. The academy offers plenty of training opportunities to help teachers develop their practice.
- The Principal encourages subject leaders to try new ideas and develop good practice within their own areas. For example, the modern foreign languages department is currently trialling a new system of target setting where it is training students to set their own targets when they get marked work back. This freedom to innovate is used very effectively by the academy to refresh and challenge the way teachers teach and leaders lead.
- The additional government funding provided through the pupil premium is used to support eligible students in a variety of ways. For example, there is a free breakfast club and funded music tuition. Students with a parent deployed in the Armed Services can borrow iPads to allow them to talk to their parents through Skype. Extra support workers and teaching assistants are

also provided. The impact of these initiatives is seen clearly in the accelerated progress of many of these students.

- The curriculum at the academy is varied and vibrant. Students have the opportunity to begin learning French in Year 5 and by Year 7 it is possible for them to be learning three languages. Through engineering and Information and Computer Technology, students are also introduced to different forms of technology and have the opportunity to use computer design programmes.
- Sports provision is outstanding. Academy sports' teams and individual students regularly perform at regional and national level. One recent example is the Year 7 and 8 girls' rugby team which won their league and went on to play at Twickenham. Sports Premium funding is used to create opportunities for all levels of ability to participate in sporting activities. One Year 6 student proudly explained that one of his best memories of school so far was playing in the seated volleyball team and winning a certificate. Attendance at sports clubs is high and records are kept on the participation of all groups of students. This involvement in sport has a positive impact by developing healthy lifestyles and improving the physical well-being of the students.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The Bedfordshire East Multi Academies Trust and the school governors provide a wealth of knowledge and experience that adds significantly to the academy's capacity to make improvements. Several of the academy's governors sit on the Trust's governing body. They hold the Principal to account for the academy's development through regular reviews of the performance data. They know where the strengths and relative weaknesses lie in teaching and how it is being improved. They ensure leaders manage the performance of all staff appropriately, using pay increments to reward effective performance. Trust Governors oversee the use of finance, including any additional funding, efficiently and ensure that all safeguarding requirements are fully met.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136713
<b>Local authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	444311

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9-13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	893
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Richard Ford
<b>Headteacher</b>	Adrian Rogers
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 May 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	01462 628800
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