

Redborne Upper School and Community College

Flitwick Road, Ampthill, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK45 2NU

Inspection dates

7–8 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The highly principled leadership and governance team supports all pupils to achieve their best. This is an inclusive school where everyone is valued and diversity is celebrated.
- Leaders pursue academic excellence. Refreshingly, not by exploiting the system but by providing a stimulating and flexible curriculum that centres on what pupils need.
- Leaders skilfully place teaching and learning at the heart of their professional development programme. Their innovative approach enables them to recruit and retain high-quality staff.
- Highly effective systems allow staff to maintain a sharp focus on monitoring standards and progress across the curriculum.
- Governors provide high-quality strategic thinking, judicious financial management, and support and challenge in equal measure.
- Pupils' behaviour and conduct are exemplary. Alongside being polite, inquisitive and supportive of one another, they want to learn.
- The bespoke programme for children who have Down's syndrome is exceptional.
- Leaders act quickly to ensure that appropriate provision or support is in place. Where gaps exist, they take innovative and effective action.
- Teachers mostly plan lessons that engage and inspire pupils. Where practice is most effective, teachers use questioning highly effectively, and explain difficult skills and concepts well.
- Pupils say that the work is challenging, but they succeed because of the continual support given by teachers and other staff.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a focal point of the curriculum. Pupils develop into well-rounded young people.
- Safeguarding processes are rigorous and effective. Staff are well versed in spotting and reporting potential risks to pupils' safety. The single central record is exemplary.
- Most staff know their pupils well and structure lessons and tasks effectively. A very small minority of teachers do not set work that challenges pupils sufficiently well.
- In 2017, pupils' progress in English and mathematics was broadly in line with national averages. Current pupils' progress shows an improved picture.
- In 2017, disadvantaged pupils made less progress at Redborne than other pupils nationally. Leaders have reviewed their support plans. Current pupils make better progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching, learning and assessment, and pupils' outcomes, outstanding, by:
 - ensuring that all teaching matches the needs of individual pupils so that more pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make rapid progress from their starting points across the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The highly principled leadership and governance team has an uncompromising ambition that all pupils should achieve their best. High expectations are the norm. Pupils enjoy school and repay staff by doing their best. As one said, 'I wake up wanting to go to school.'
- The outstanding principal, ably supported by the head of school, has crafted a highly effective leadership team. Their strong moral purpose ensures that each pupil follows a personalised curriculum, irrespective of the negative impact this may have on some progress measures. This unstinting belief helps many achieve beyond what they might have done under a more formal curriculum. The vast majority of pupils progress successfully to education, employment or training when they leave.
- Leaders position the school at the heart of the local community and have the highest aspirations for pupils. Governors provide momentum to ensure that these aspirations are realised. The school's wide range of enrichment opportunities, alongside its formal curriculum, contributes extremely well to pupils', spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As one pupil said: 'I have grown in confidence, maturity and knowledge. I do not believe that I would be the person I am today without the nurturing environment that Redborne has provided'.
- Systems for monitoring teachers' performance and tracking pupils' progress are extremely strong. Leaders know their school well and act decisively to address weaknesses. They use training and performance management highly effectively to drive standards higher.
- Leaders are highly proactive and innovative in both solving their own recruitment challenges and in helping to arrest future teaching staff shortages. The school has teaching school status and has 58 students on the School Direct programme. As an endorsement of the quality of its work, the local authority commissioned the school to run professional studies groups and provide the induction programme for newly qualified teachers. There are also 35 Year 13 students on the Teachers for Tomorrow Scheme; the 14 former students currently on the staff illustrate the success of the school's 'grow your own' philosophy.
- The view that all pupils should receive a first class education extends beyond the confines of the school gates. As a national leader of education, the principal ensures that staff provide a wide range of support to other schools and university technical colleges. This helps a far broader base of pupils to achieve better outcomes.
- The curriculum goes beyond tokenism. It is truly broad and balanced. Despite financial pressures, leaders are committed towards high-quality arts and technology provision, staffed by subject specialists. Redborne pupils, and those from the local community, also benefit from the wonderful farm provision. The bespoke programme for the small number of children who have Down's syndrome is exceptional; it changes lives and gives these pupils a brighter future.
- Leaders identified a gap in provision to meet the needs of a small group of pupils who

were otherwise at risk of exclusion. The principal led the bid to set up the Academy of Central Bedfordshire. There is now alternative provision that caters successfully for pupils from Redborne and other schools. This has helped the school to maintain pupils' engagement in education and reduce exclusions.

- Leaders and governors successfully source additional funding to improve resources and create opportunities for all pupils. These include the new buildings in the school, the farm renovation, the bursaries for sixth-form students, and the apprenticeships at the farm and in physical education to name but a few. The principal, working with other heads in the local authority, is currently looking to improve the specialist provision in the area for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- The school makes good use of additional funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Pupils receive excellent support because leaders have a good understanding of their needs and communicate these effectively to teachers. The strong links with the feeder schools help to ensure continuity and information sharing to smooth pupils' transition to Redborne. Curriculum support assistants receive guided training, and are allocated effectively to ensure that pupils' individual needs are met.
- Leaders have increased their efforts to identify more accurately the barriers to learning that disadvantaged pupils face. They use their pupil premium funding well, and target the support for these pupils more effectively. Current information from the school shows that disadvantaged pupils are making better progress across the curriculum, including in English and mathematics. The recent appointment of a pupil-premium 'tsar' to work across the lower and middle schools is helping to identify some deep-rooted issues and ensure that interventions are in place earlier.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a highly accurate picture of the school's strengths and the very few areas that require further development. They interpret information effectively to see how well the school is performing. They are aware of pupils' progress, including groups of pupils.
- Governors provide high-quality strategic thinking and structure their work well to focus effectively on how to maintain high standards. They ensure that staff carry out their statutory safeguarding duties.
- Governors ensure proper financial accountability, including the use of the pupil premium funding. They make innovative and informed financial decisions to secure the long-term future of the school.
- Governors undertake a skills audit when recruiting new governors to ensure they have a wide range of expertise. They oversee the performance management process effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders always base their decisions on what is in the best interests of pupils – a core principle of good safeguarding practice.

- Leaders provide comprehensive induction processes. Staff receive guidance on the school's procedures for raising concerns, alongside the statutory guidance. They receive useful guidance regarding all types of abuse.
- Staff are aware of the procedures to follow should they have any concerns about pupils' welfare or in the event of allegations being made. The school adopts a policy of 'report everything' and staff record concerns, even those that appear minor. The designated safeguarding lead has been trained and makes referrals timely and appropriately.
- Staff are familiar with their responsibilities to protect pupils from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.
- Pupils said that they feel safe and, as seen throughout the inspection, staff cover a number of topical issues sensitively to ensure that pupils keep safe. Parents said almost unequivocally that pupils are safe and well-cared-for.
- The single central record is exemplary. All checks are carried out, recorded accurately, and appropriate risk assessments in place as required.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders' innovative approach to improve the quality of teaching, including bespoke training, the School Direct and Teachers for Tomorrow programmes, has been highly effective. Teaching, learning and assessment are good, with areas of outstanding practice within the school.
- Inspectors all noted the productive relationships that exist between pupils and teachers as a common feature in lessons. Teachers' high expectations of what pupils can achieve ensure that the vast majority of pupils learn effectively.
- Pupils voice their opinions articulately. They make valuable and insightful contributions to class discussions. Inspectors commented on the confident use of precise vocabulary and advanced subject terminology by teachers and pupils. Homework is used systematically to consolidate and deepen learning.
- A consistently strong feature noted during the inspection was teachers' use of questioning. Different teachers use a range of questioning styles and techniques to probe pupils' understanding, elicit more information and keep pupils focused. For example, in an ethical thinking lesson the teachers' continual request of 'why?', 'what else?' and 'explain what you mean' helped pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding.
- Inspectors noted that teachers' subject knowledge, seen across a broad range of subjects, is strong. Pupils are guided through difficult concepts because teachers address the common misconceptions well.
- Teaching at Redborne involves a range of assessment techniques. Peer assessment is used well and allows pupils constructively to critique the work of others, while developing a greater understanding of the success criteria.
- Teachers help pupils extend their knowledge by helping them to understand the work more successfully. They use strategies, such as mind maps, to help pupils to organise

their thoughts more efficiently. As one said, 'It helps me to set out my ideas, and understand the work better.'

- Pupils mostly display resilience in learning from their mistakes. Pupils want to learn, and want to make good progress in their learning. Teachers' effective use of individual assessment sheets allows them to highlight pupils' strengths, and fill any gaps in their knowledge.
- Teachers assess pupils frequently and accurately. They provide parents with regular information on the progress their children are making. Teachers and leaders across the school work collaboratively to share best practice and make accurate predictions; these inform a rigorous programme of support and revision for pupils.
- Most pupils value the regular homework and said that it helps them consolidate their learning. Some did say that they get too much.
- Pupils appreciate the time given by teachers outside of normal lessons to help them improve their learning. This is a key factor in strengthening pupils' progress.
- Teachers know their pupils well. They understand what pupils can do and plan work carefully to meet their needs. Pupils demonstrate extremely positive attitudes in lessons. Time in lessons is used productively. However, very occasionally a small minority of pupils do not get work that is sufficiently demanding and the pace of learning slows.
- Pupils mostly receive and value teachers' feedback. This helps them to improve the parts of their work that they found difficult. However, there are some inconsistencies in how pupils respond to the feedback given.
- In some instances, the quality of pupils' work is not matched by the highest standards of presentation in books and folders. A very small number of pupils complete work that lacks neatness and accuracy. This was more common where pupils' literacy skills were less developed.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils develop extremely well academically and socially because staff know them well and leaders give them the opportunities to succeed. As one pupil said: 'Just as Redborne has helped me to grow, it helps every other student to strive to become their best. Redborne has made me, and, in return, I have helped to make Redborne.'
- The school is a highly inclusive place to learn. Leaders celebrate the fact that different pupils bring different qualities to the school. Leaders do not abdicate responsibility when faced with pupils' challenging behaviour. Instead, they ensure that provision is available to meet pupils' needs.
- The school caters very effectively for the welfare and personal development of many pupils, including vulnerable pupils through their farm provision. The curriculum for the pupils who have Down's syndrome is tailored to their needs and gives them the skills to

succeed in life. The close and productive partnerships with parents further enhance the very positive outcomes pupils achieve.

- The small number of pupils who complete courses at the Academy of Central Bedfordshire, Bedford College or complete extended work placements with local employers attend well and make good progress. A member of staff supports pupils while at college. Staff track pupils' attendance and monitor their progress closely.
- There is a comprehensive careers programme for pupils in all year groups. This enables them to learn about the world of work, answer questions such as 'who am I?' and develop workplace skills. The school works closely with hard-to-reach families and pupils who are without firm plans for the future. This is a real strength of the school. The number of pupils who progress into education, employment or training has consistently increased over the last three years.
- Pupils' behaviour for learning, including attitudes and self-confidence, visibly enables them to make good progress. Pupils take their work, and that of other pupils, seriously.
- Pupils said that bullying is rare. They are confident that if they had a problem, a member of staff would help them. Parents agree.
- All students in key stage 3 and 4 follow a programme that includes personal welfare and ethical thinking lessons. Inspectors saw staff handling some delicate issues sensitively and appropriately. This helps pupils to develop the strategies they need to keep themselves safe.
- Pupils feel safe at school. Ninety-six per cent of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, said their children felt safe at school. The school's work to help pupils stay safe is highly effective.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They are demonstrably happy. They move about a large and complex site in an orderly and purposeful way.
- Staff expect pupils to behave well. Pupils respond positively and their behaviour is exemplary. Inspectors saw no low-level disruption in any lessons throughout the inspection.
- Leaders have established an ethos where pupils respect each other and their school. The environment is conducive to learning. Although buildings are old, the displays are vibrant, neat, tidy and well maintained. The site is virtually free of litter.
- Pupils are polite and courteous to visitors. They are friendly, and willing to talk to others. They smile and hold open doors for visitors. Inspectors noted their positive behaviour throughout the inspection.
- Leaders monitor pupils' attendance carefully on a fortnightly basis. The actions taken to raise attendance have been extremely effective. The current attendance figure for all pupils is significantly higher than the national figure.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved from last year and is now much closer to the national figure for all pupils. Leaders are working more closely with the

education welfare officer to support these pupils further.

- The persistent absenteeism of a few pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, is high. However, inspectors noted that this mainly stems from new pupils arriving at the school with serious attendance issues. Leaders now meet with parents, prior to new arrivals joining the school, to set out their expectations. This is having a marked impact on improving these pupils' attendance over time.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- By the end of Year 11, pupils make good progress from their starting points in almost all subjects. Standards of attainment at the end of key stage 4 across the curriculum are consistently higher than the national average. For example, unvalidated GCSE results for 2017 saw three quarters of all pupils achieving standard passes in both English and mathematics, while half of all pupils achieved strong passes in both subjects.
- Outcomes are strong in most subjects, specifically German, French, Spanish, classics, art and design, music, religious studies, physical education, business studies, child development and hospitality. The highly effective practice in these areas enables pupils to develop skills and acquire secure knowledge and understanding of the material that they are studying.
- The most able pupils make good progress in all subjects. This is because teachers plan work that pupils find challenging. As a result, pupils are focused, keen and have very positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress across almost all subjects. Pupils make above-average progress in mathematics, and their progress is broadly in line with national standards for English. Many pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities complete qualifications and acquire skills linked to the school's farm provision. On these courses, they make very good progress and achieve beyond their targets.
- Most pupils progress to the school's sixth form. Pupils who follow a more vocational programme move on to either college courses or linked apprenticeship programmes. There is a three-year declining trend of pupils becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training). This shows the positive impact that the bespoke provision has on pupils' life chances.
- In several subjects, including French and German, disadvantaged pupils' progress has remained strong. In other subjects, including in English and mathematics, the progress they made dipped in 2017. However, the school's own information and work seen in pupils' books show an improving picture.
- The school uses its information well to highlight when disadvantaged pupils are not making the progress they should. However, in 2017 disadvantaged pupils made less progress at Redborne than other pupils nationally. Staff are now increasingly aware of the barriers and respond quickly, using targeted initiatives to raise achievement. In some subjects, including core subjects, disadvantaged pupils currently on roll are making slightly better progress than other pupils nationally.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- As with the rest of the school, leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. Heads of faculty discuss their rigorous analysis of examination results with senior leaders. Alongside teaching observation records, this analysis forms the basis for their evaluation of the sixth form and future development plans. Sixth-form outcomes have remained consistently outstanding over a number of years.
- In the sixth form, teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to challenge students and provide highly personalised lessons. Teaching is characterised by excellent subject knowledge, positive relationships, and well-planned learning activities that meet pupils' needs well. Teachers' explanations are clear and precise and students value their teachers' expertise and support. This explains the outstanding achievement in the sixth form over a number of years.
- Students enjoy being part of the sixth form. They are well-cared-for and well-looked-after. Students value the trust and responsibility they are given. They treat each other with kindness and respect. They attend well. As one student said: 'I felt tears in my eyes when leaving the sixth-form open evening. I suddenly realised just how much I was going to miss this place.'
- Sixth-form students' progress is outstanding. They appreciate the fact that their teachers 'go the extra mile' to help them achieve, and work extremely well independently. The progress students make is in line with that of the top 10% of schools in the country. Results in all subjects are high, but those in music technology, law, health and social care, English literature, mathematics, business, fashion and clothing and the extended project qualification are extremely high. These students continually outperform their peers nationally in terms of the progress they make from their starting points.
- The vast majority of students who join the sixth form in Year 12 complete their courses at the end of Year 13. A small number leave at the end of Year 12 to take up other opportunities, such as apprenticeships, employment with training or specific vocational courses. Sixth formers achieve academic and work-related qualifications that reflect the outstanding progress they make. External measures show that pupils' progress in finance, law, sports studies, and music technology is significantly above average. Attainment is consistently above national figures currently and historically.
- The same high-quality impartial careers guidance available for younger pupils is also provided for sixth-form students. The school's careers adviser supports students with their next steps. Students receive good advice and individual help to write their university applications. The proportion of students moving to university is consistently higher than that seen nationally, as is the proportion of students who attend the highly rated Russell Group universities, including and Oxford and Cambridge.
- A small number of students join the sixth form without having secured GCSEs in English and mathematics at grade 4 or C or higher. These students receive timetabled lessons in English and/or mathematics and virtually all achieve grade 4 or C or higher when they resit their examinations.
- Leaders provide a superb range of enrichment opportunities in which students are keen

to participate. Some mentor younger pupils or support them in lessons; some work as library mentors; some take part in form-time buddying work, while others take part in or help with sporting events. Many students are involved in music, dance, or drama, and several take part in the regular productions.

- All students are involved in work-related learning that gives them useful skills to help them achieve their career aspirations. Prospective veterinary students assist on the farm, some complete work-related placements and others benefit from trips to specific industries. These raise students' ambitions and help them to make informed choices about which careers to pursue or not pursue. Students also take part in charity fundraising, international visits and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.
- Safeguarding is effective in the sixth form. Students understand how to keep themselves safe and how to live healthy lifestyles. A tutorial programme includes topics such as mental health, drugs and alcohol, safe driving, and sexual health.

School details

Unique reference number	136559
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10037198

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.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	13 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,650
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	450
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Richard A'Court
principal	Nigel Croft
Telephone number	01525 404462
Website	www.redbornecommunitycollege.com
Email address	head@Redborne.beds.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 September 2008

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Redborne Upper School and Community College is a larger-than-average-sized upper school, with a large sixth form.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school is below the national average, as

is the overall proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. However, the proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is broadly in line with the national average because the school is a popular choice for parents of pupils with complex needs, including those with Down's syndrome.

- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11, in 2016.
- Redborne Upper School and Community College converted to become an academy in February 2012. When its predecessor school with the same name was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school was awarded teaching school status in September 2017. The local authority has commissioned the school to provide induction training for new teachers.
- The principal is a national leader of education and currently supports schools and university technical colleges locally.
- The school makes use of off-site alternative provision for a small number of pupils. The providers are the Academy of Central Bedfordshire and Bedford College.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors carried out observations, many of which were joint observations with senior leaders, across all year groups and in a wide range of subjects. They also visited tutor group sessions, attended a training session for curriculum support assistants and watched an assembly.
- Inspectors looked carefully at pupils' work, and talked to five groups of pupils from different year groups to discuss their experience of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the principal, the head of school, senior and middle leaders, newly qualified teachers, trainees and governors.
- An inspector held a telephone conversation with the executive head from the Academy of Central Bedfordshire, one of the alternative providers the school uses. Another inspector held telephone conversations with the director of children's services and a staff member from the school improvement service at the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation including safeguarding records, case studies, attendance records, self-evaluation summaries, the school improvement plan and current assessment information.
- Inspectors took account of the views of pupils, and members of staff. They also considered the responses from 474 parents via the online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

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Brenda Watson	Ofsted Inspector
Phillip Barr	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Bailey	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Davies	Ofsted Inspector
John Edwards	Ofsted Inspector

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