

Inspection of a good school: Redborne Upper School and Community College

Flitwick Road, Ampthill, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK45 2NU

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 May 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

While many pupils enjoy their time at school and learn well, some pupils do not. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not always get the help they need to succeed.

Pupils generally behave well. They listen to teachers and to each other. They are polite and courteous, and they demonstrate respect for the individuality of other people. Most pupils can be themselves in safety and with confidence.

Many pupils feel there is someone in school they can talk to about any worries they might have. However, some pupils feel they cannot approach the pastoral 'hub' because they feel they will not be listened to, or that the action taken will not help. Bullying is not a significant problem, but some pupils are not confident that it will always be dealt with well if it is reported.

Too many pupils are frequently absent from school. This impacts negatively on how much they learn, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.

Leaders aim high in working to develop pupils' wider experiences. Trips and visits are well on the way to returning to pre-pandemic levels. A wide range of extra-curricular activities enrich pupils' education.

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

Leaders and governors recognised that there was some drift from the standards evident at the time of the previous inspection. With the full backing of governors, leaders have worked strategically to make improvements.

Leaders' first target was to improve behaviour, and they have done so. Pupils and staff report improvements, reflecting the positive behaviours inspectors saw first hand. There have, at times, been areas that were made unpleasant by the inappropriate behaviours of some pupils. Leaders' considered management of the school site and the effective deployment of staff have done much to resolve this.

One aspect of leaders' approach to supporting pupils' well-being and behaviour has been the creation of a central pastoral 'hub'. Sitting at the heart of the school site, this 'one stop shop' is where key safeguarding and pastoral staff are available to pupils. While there are notable benefits to this, the hub is visible and staffed all day, it is also very busy. Some pupils feel that staff in the hub do not have time for them and that their concerns are not taken seriously or followed up well. They are reluctant to approach the hub with their worries.

Leaders' work to develop the curriculum was slowed by the pandemic but has still been largely successful. Pupils typically learn well from knowledgeable staff. Leaders give teachers clarity over what to teach and when. Teachers adhere to this, reinforcing knowledge at different times to make sure it 'sticks' in pupils' memories. They check that pupils have learned what they need to and address pupils' knowledge gaps and misunderstandings.

There are some parts of pupils' education that are not as well catered for as most. In some subjects, teachers do not ensure that pupils understand the basics of a subject before asking them to undertake complex tasks. While leaders want to support pupils to read well, they have not put in place a systematic approach to help pupils who struggle to read accurately or fluently. Pupils' learning in these areas is not as strong as in most.

Pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders' system to provide teachers with information to support pupils' needs is new. It contains pertinent and helpful information but has not had time to have sufficient impact. Leaders have worked to improve the attendance of pupils with SEND, as well as of disadvantaged pupils. This has not, at this stage, led to a sufficient increase in the amount of time some of these pupils spend in school. It further limits the achievement of these pupils.

Leaders promote pupils' wider development well. Trips to the theatre and overseas visits support pupils' understanding of the wider world. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is a prominent feature, giving many pupils the chance to learn about what they are capable of. Leaders have expanded the programme of careers education to further enhance pupils' understanding of their future choices.

Teachers enjoy working at the school. Leaders are considerate of staff's workload and try to ensure that staff are only asked to do something if there is a good reason.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are vigilant in following up concerns about pupils' welfare. They are mindful of specific issues that might affect the pupils in their care, such as the mental well-being of pupils since the pandemic. Leaders are alert to the risks this poses and conscientious in seeking support.

Leaders have ensured that appropriate pre-employment checks have been carried out on adults who work in the school. Staff have been trained to keep pupils safe. Leaders encourage pupils to pass on worries to staff. Pupils know that they could pass concerns on. However, because they do not feel this will always be helpful, some are reluctant to do so.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils perceive that the pastoral care team will not respond helpfully to concerns they raise. As a result, some pupils are reluctant to share their worries with staff. Leaders should ensure that all pupils know that they should and can report things that worry them, and that these reports will be dealt with well.
- The system for sharing important information with staff about pupils with SEND has recently been overhauled. It has not, at this stage, ensured that pupils get all the support they need. Leaders need to ensure that staff know and use the information they have to support all pupils to succeed.
- The attendance of pupils with SEND and of disadvantaged pupils is lower than it should be. This is having a negative impact on their educational achievement. Leaders need to make sure that all groups of pupils attend school well.
- Some aspects of pupils' education, including in learning to read, are weaker than most. Consequently, pupils learn less well in these areas. Leaders should put in place systems that ensure pupils learn well across the curriculum, including through the use of an approach to identify and support pupils who struggle to read accurately or fluently.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually, this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good on 7 and 8 November 2017.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

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	136559
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10268567
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	13 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,636
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	450
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Chris Templeman
Headteacher	Olly Button
Website	http://redbornecommunitycollege.com
Date of previous inspection	7 and 8 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school makes use of three unregistered and three registered alternative education providers.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, design technology, geography and business studies. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector also met with trustees, including the chair of the trust.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks, spoke with leaders of safeguarding, reviewed safeguarding records and spoke with staff and pupils.
- Inspectors considered the 119 responses to the Ofsted's staff survey, the 377 responses to the pupil survey, and the 299 responses to the survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 293 free-text responses.

Inspection team

Andrew Hemmings, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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