

Biggleswade Academy

Mead End, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire SG18 8JU

Inspection dates

25–26 June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Parents and carers are positive about the school and the recent changes in senior leadership. They say that this has improved the running of the school.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe. They show good attitudes to learning. Pupils of all ages get on well together.
- An inclusive culture and the acceptance of difference are strengths of the school. Pupils respect people from different backgrounds and treat everyone equally.
- The teaching of reading and mathematics is good. Pupils are proud of their work and enjoy talking about what they are learning.
- Pupils do not correct their spelling and grammatical errors because teaching staff do not point them out to them regularly enough.
- Leaders do not ensure that the Year 7 catch-up funding is spent effectively to benefit the pupils for whom it is intended.
- Staff are proud to work at the school. They welcome the recent improvements.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Consequently, pupils behave well in class, work hard and make the most of their learning time.
- Trustees understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They provide a good level of challenge and support to leaders. Governance structures are now appropriate and effective.
- Leaders correctly identify and work to remove the barriers to learning of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, pupils with SEND make good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders are rigorous in their promoting and monitoring of attendance. Overall attendance is in line with the national average.
- Teaching in early years requires improvement. Adults do not consistently model play or use questioning that extends the knowledge and understanding of children.
- At times, some pupils are not given sufficient challenge. Consequently, these pupils do not make as much progress as they could.
- Leaders and governors have not ensured that pupils have enough opportunities to apply their knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum.
- Leaders' analysis of data is not forensic enough to ensure that all pupils make the strong progress they should.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of provision in early years, by:
 - ensuring that planned activities are purposeful and challenging
 - using questioning to probe children’s understanding and extend their learning
 - developing children’s basic skills more effectively.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by ensuring that:
 - all pupils receive work that is sufficiently challenging
 - teachers correct pupils’ basic mistakes in spelling, grammar and punctuation so that pupils apply this knowledge to their writing.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
 - providing opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge, understanding and skills across the curriculum
 - analysing data more forensically to ensure that all pupils make strong progress
 - making more effective use of the Year 7 catch-up funding.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, which are picked up in the school development plan.
- Senior leaders have ensured that professional development for staff is appropriate and well used. As a result, the quality of teaching is good.
- Middle leaders are knowledgeable about the subjects that they lead. Strategies that they have implemented have improved the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils make.
- Leadership of pupils with SEND is effective. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is determined that pupils with SEND will make the good progress that they should. The SENCo ensures that, where appropriate, small steps of progress are identified for individuals so that all pupils are able to enjoy success, whatever their needs.
- Leaders work well with the local authority and other local schools to verify their own judgements of the school's effectiveness. In addition, trained moderators from Biggleswade Academy check the accuracy of judgements at other schools.
- Pupils are prepared very well for life in modern British society. They are taught to treat everyone as equals and not to judge people, particularly on the characteristics protected by law. Pupils are taught about issues such as democracy and the rule of law through discussions, assemblies and visits.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are aware of social and moral issues through their values. These promote equality, encourage all pupils to reach their dreams and develop perseverance and resilience.
- The pupil premium grant is used effectively and helps disadvantaged pupils make good progress. Leaders have correctly identified the barriers to learning these pupils may face and have applied measures to tackle them.
- The physical education (PE) and sport funding is spent effectively. The school has increased the range of equipment and the number of competitive events available to pupils both within the school and against other schools.
- Careers guidance is well developed. Pupils in key stage 3 receive regular work-related learning, and local employers have been engaged to provide real-world experience.
- The school's curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced. Leaders ensure that there is good coverage of all national curriculum subjects. However, the links between them do not consistently allow pupils to make connections between the different parts of their learning.
- The school's curriculum does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their knowledge, understanding and skills from one subject area to another. Leaders have not planned opportunities for pupils to acquire new knowledge by building on the knowledge they already have.

- The Year 7 catch-up funding is not sufficiently focused on improving the outcomes for the pupils for whom it is provided.
- Leaders do not track the progress that pupils make closely enough. They focus too much on attainment and whether or not pupils are working at the expected standard for their age. This means that leaders are not able to be forensic enough in their analysis of data and to use this to help them to ensure that all pupils make even better progress.

Governance of the school

- Recent changes in governance have resulted in members of the governing body being appointed to the trust board and the school being governed by one layer of governance instead of two. This is appropriate because there is only one school in the trust.
- The trustees have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have taken recent and decisive action to develop the senior leadership team and make it appropriate for the size of the school.
- The trustees provide support and challenge to senior leaders. They are ambitious for the pupils.
- The legal duties relating to safeguarding are clearly understood by the trust board, ensuring that staff are recruited with careful consideration. Governors regularly check safeguarding records.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a culture of safeguarding. All staff are regularly trained and kept up to date on how to keep children safe. They diligently implement and follow the school's safeguarding procedures. Leaders' records are detailed, clear and up to date. The designated safeguarding leads act swiftly in response to concerns about pupils' safety and monitor pupils to ensure they are well looked after.
- Pupils are kept safe on the different sites by having a dedicated safeguarding lead present in each building. Levels of staff supervision are appropriate to minimise any risk.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. They feel very safe at school because they trust the adults working with them to help them deal with any problems.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Relationships between teaching staff and pupils are strong. Teachers know pupils very well. It is clear to pupils that they enjoy working with them. As a result, pupils like coming to school and are keen to learn.
- Routines are well established throughout the school. Pupils know what happens when,

and what is expected of them at different points in the day. This enables them to respond quickly so that transitions between and during lessons happen quickly and smoothly. This means that little learning time is lost.

- Teachers have strong subject knowledge and use questioning effectively both to check whether pupils have understood and to deepen their learning. For example, teachers question pupils carefully in order to recap knowledge of what pupils have learned previously before introducing new learning.
- The teaching of phonics and early reading skills is good. As a result, pupils make good progress. Pupils enjoy reading and they are able to use their phonics knowledge to read unknown words. Pupils spoken with were enthusiastic about reading and said they enjoy a wide range of books.
- Mathematics teaching is good because of the consistent whole-school approach that develops the vocabulary of pupils. Well-chosen teaching strategies enable pupils to quickly understand new concepts. For example, pupils in Year 3 used blocks to enable them to understand the place value of numbers with four digits.
- Provision for high-needs learners with autism spectrum disorder is effective within a separate provision. Pupils listen carefully to what interests them and follow instructions because they understand the high expectations and routines. In a session observed, pupils listened carefully to information about fossils and were keen to learn more about dinosaurs and fossils. Where appropriate, pupils from the autism spectrum disorder provision are integrated very effectively into lessons alongside their peers. The additional support meets their needs.
- Pupils in key stage 3 are set regular homework across the curriculum. Pupils and the majority of parents agree that homework helps them to find out more about their learning and that they have about the right amount.
- Pupils say that they prefer learning that requires them to be actively involved in the lesson. They say that sometimes, learning lacks challenge and they do not get to move on to harder work.
- Most teachers deploy additional adults well so that they are effective at working with pupils to improve their knowledge and develop their skills.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' spelling, grammar and punctuation are not high enough. Pupils frequently repeat mistakes in their books.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are proud to be a member of the school, with the vast majority recommending the school to a friend. They enjoy school and say that teachers help them to do their best. They say that behaviour around the school is good and that bullying, although rare, is resolved effectively by adults when it does occur.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes towards other people. They understand that there are differences between people, such as someone's religion or the colour of their skin.

Pupils said that the school teaches them to treat everyone equally.

- Pupils say that they make good friendships. Older pupils support younger pupils well by being 'big buddies' who give out equipment at playtimes and help pupils make friends.
- Pupils take pride in their work and their appearance. When given the opportunity, pupils work well together in pairs and groups. During these tasks, pupils display confidence and independence. Pupils spoke confidently about their school.
- Pupils feel safe. They know how to stay safe online and are able to talk about ways of keeping themselves safe outside school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well throughout the school. They move with responsibility and courtesy between the different school buildings, arriving at lessons promptly. They know the school's rules and they understand the reasons why rules are necessary. Pupils encourage each other to do the right thing. As a result, the school is a calm and orderly place.
- Leaders give attendance an appropriately high priority. Effective procedures tackle absence. Overall attendance and the attendance of different groups of pupils are broadly in line with national averages. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school is below the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The work in pupils' books is of a good quality. Pupils have made good progress since the start of the academic year. Work is well presented, and pupils do their best and most teachers expect the best from them.
- Most pupils make good progress in English and mathematics and across the curriculum from their different starting points. This is evident in pupils' work and from conversations with pupils.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress from their individual starting points. The SENCo ensures that, where necessary, pupils' learning is broken down into small, achievable steps. This enables staff to track pupils' progress accurately and to ensure that they are achieving well.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, make good progress from their starting points. Their needs are known well by staff, who ensure that they are provided with the support that they need.
- Leaders' monitoring shows that attainment rates continue to increase in Years 7 and 8 after pupils have left key stage 2.
- Published attainment data for key stage 1 and key stage 2 shows that attainment for reading, writing and mathematics at the expected standard is at least in line with the national average.

- The teaching of phonics in Years 1 and 2 is good. Achievement in phonics is above the national average. Pupils read with enthusiasm, sounding out words and using their phonics skills to read a wide range of books.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Not all adults notice and intervene in a timely way to develop children's learning effectively. When they do engage children, adults do not always have the skills to use questions that promote interest and further knowledge. As a result, many opportunities to develop children's skills and understanding are not acted upon.
- The teaching of phonics in Reception does not support children to make expected progress. Adults do not always model pure sounds and do not enable children to improve their segmenting and blending skills so that they can read new words.
- Reception leaders do not routinely plan activities that engage the interest of the children and deepen their understanding. Consequently, children struggle to stay engaged with activities for sustained periods of time.
- The quality of teaching does not offer sufficient challenge across the breadth of the early years curriculum. Furthermore, the level of challenge in the activities provided does not enable children to extend their thinking. Consequently, not enough children make good progress from when they join the Reception Year, and do not leave early years ready for Year 1.
- In Nursery and in the pre-school, where provision is stronger, adults plan learning that meets children's needs and provides them with opportunities to develop the characteristics of effective learning through play and exploration. For example, during an investigation using ramps to see how far cars travelled, children tried different angles and had measures to help them recall their number skills.
- Arrangements for safeguarding children are effective and statutory welfare requirements are met. Adults supervise children well. They ensure that children are taught to be safe and independent in all areas of the early years provision.

School details

Unique reference number	137947
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10087455

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

Type of school	Middle deemed primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	960
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair	Chris Jones
Principal	Shelley Flynn
Telephone number	01767 660515
Website	www.biggleswadeacademy.org
Email address	seflynn@biggleswadeacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	10 December 2014

Information about this school

- Biggleswade Academy became an academy in August 2012. It is currently the only member of Life Academies Trust and is managed and governed directly by the trust board.
- Biggleswade Academy was formed when Holmemead Middle School and Southlands Lower School merged. There are two separate nursery provisions. One is on the Biggleswade Academy site, and The Lawns Nursery is on a separate site. The Lawns Nursery became part of Biggleswade Academy in 2016.
- Biggleswade Academy is larger than the average-sized middle or primary school.
- The school has specially resourced provision for eight pupils with autism spectrum disorder.
- There is a well-established arrangement for pupils from a nearby special school to use classrooms and join in activities at Biggleswade Academy.

- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average.
- Over half the pupils join the school in Year 5 from other local lower schools.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning across all year groups.
- The inspectors held meetings with the principal, trustees, leaders, school staff and the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' work, information on pupils' attainment and progress, curriculum planning and records of leaders' monitoring of subjects. The inspectors also looked at the minutes of governing body meetings, safeguarding documents (including mandatory checks made on the recruitment of staff), and the school's website.
- Discussions were held with the school council and inspectors held informal conversations with pupils during lessons and breaktimes.
- The inspectors took account of 131 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View, 128 responses to Ofsted's free-text service, five responses via email or letter, 81 responses to the staff survey and 44 responses to the pupil survey. Inspectors also spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day.

Inspection team

John Crane, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Mellors	Her Majesty's Inspector
James Dyke	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Harbrow	Ofsted Inspector

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