

Biddenham International School and Sports College

Biddenham Turn, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK40 4AZ

Inspection dates

26–27 March 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
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors monitor the school's work closely and take well-judged actions to tackle any areas of weakness. As a result, teaching is typically good.
- Pupils enjoy their learning. They appreciate their positive and productive relationships with their teachers and each other. Pupils show respect for the beliefs and lifestyles of their peers in this diverse school community.
- Teachers often use questioning well to identify what pupils know and who needs more help. Teachers develop pupils' thinking skills well.
- Current pupils are making good progress in many subjects, including English and mathematics, within the school's very broad curriculum.
- Pupils usually behave well. Leaders and teachers help individual pupils who find it difficult to manage their behaviour so that they can improve it.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. As a result, these pupils usually make good progress from their individual starting points.
- The school is an inclusive community. Effective support helps individual pupils who join from other schools with previous poor patterns of attendance, behaviour or progress to move forward in their learning.
- Pupils are safe and feel safe at school because they are well looked after. The curriculum gives pupils a very secure understanding of how to minimise different risks that they might face.
- Current students are making good progress in the sixth form overall, and particularly strong progress in their vocational courses. A high proportion of students go on to university.
- Sometimes, subject leaders do not ensure that effective teaching techniques are adopted as quickly as they could be by their departmental colleagues.
- Some pupils' extended writing skills are insufficiently well developed.
- Teaching does not enable pupils to apply their mathematics knowledge to problem-solving activities with enough confidence.
- A few teachers do not respond effectively enough when a small minority of pupils engage in low-level disruption to learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - all pupils fully develop their ability to convey their explanations, answers and arguments appropriately when writing at length in different subjects
 - pupils can readily apply their mathematics skills to problem-solving activities
 - all subject leaders share effective teaching strategies quickly and support teachers to adopt them.
- Ensure that all teachers follow the school's behaviour policy consistently, so that positive behaviour is encouraged, and low-level disruption is eliminated.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders and governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They are determinedly focused upon improving the effectiveness of teaching, so that the needs of all pupils within this diverse and inclusive community are met.
- Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching carefully. They provide teachers with high-quality training, particularly in the school's 'big 5' priorities, that develops the teaching of many well. Teachers understand the school's development priorities and most feel well supported in working to meet them.
- Leaders make checks that confirm the accuracy of teachers' assessment of pupils' work and monitor pupils' progress carefully. Leaders use this information to provide additional help for pupils at risk of falling behind.
- Senior leaders also spot patterns or trends that might indicate a weakness in teaching or in an aspect of the curriculum. They then review provision and make improvements when necessary. This work has been effective in promoting pupils' improved progress in science and geography.
- Disadvantaged pupils are well supported. Leaders identify any barriers to individual pupils' learning and work to remove these. Overall, current disadvantaged pupils are attending well and making progress at a similar rate to others with the same starting points.
- Leaders identify the needs of pupils with SEND and ensure that staff know these and have the knowledge and resources they need to meet them. Most are making good progress academically from their individual starting points as a result. The school's support also promotes SEND pupils' personal development well.
- Leaders use additional funding in a well-targeted manner to help pupils in Year 7 who need to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.
- The school's curriculum is particularly broad. At key stage 3, the project-based approach engages pupils' interest. Pupils are encouraged to use what they know in one subject to aid their learning in others. Pupils also learn about how to stay safe and look after their physical and mental health, for example through their 'essential life skills' learning.
- The curriculum helps to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education well, through trips, visits and other activities. The religious studies and personal, social and health education courses that pupils study make a notable contribution to enabling all pupils in this very diverse community to understand and respect each other's backgrounds, cultures and beliefs.
- The local authority has provided support through external specialists, who have helped promote improvements in teaching in their work with the mathematics and science departments.

- The extent to which subject leaders ensure that effective approaches to teaching are adopted swiftly by all teachers is too variable. This sometimes means that the impact of the training teachers receive is uneven within subject areas.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a deep understanding of the school's main strengths and weaknesses, supplementing information that leaders provide with visits to the school and meetings with key staff. This helps enable governors to ask leaders incisive questions that hold them to account.
- Governors use everything they know about the school's work to help determine appropriate improvement priorities. They use their expertise to monitor how far leaders and teachers are meeting the objectives. This monitoring is rigorous and regular.
- Periodically, governors review the progress of different groups of pupils across all subjects, and regularly check standards in other aspects of the school's work, such as pupils' attendance and behaviour. Governors have prioritised improvements where these have been most necessary, such as in the improvement of attendance and the quality of teaching in key subjects.
- Governors check disadvantaged pupils' progress carefully, and test leaders' decisions about how to allocate funding that the school receives for these pupils, including by using national evidence about what is effective. Typically, disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their starting points.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors carry out all necessary pre-employment checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with pupils. The school's single central record meets all statutory requirements. Leaders and governors check the accuracy of entries regularly.
- Senior leaders have a secure understanding of local contextual safeguarding risks, including those relating to gang activity and drug-related ('county lines') issues. They make sure that, through assemblies, visiting speakers and drama productions, pupils learn about these risks and how best to avoid or manage them.
- Staff benefit from regularly updated training which enables them to identify changes in a pupil's attendance, behaviour or appearance that might indicate a concern. Safeguarding records show that staff follow the clear procedures in place when reporting any concerns.
- Child protection records are accurately kept. Staff use these to make timely and well-judged decisions about how to respond if a pupil needs help. Staff work with external agencies so that pupils receive the support that they need.
- Staff share relevant information with alternative providers and work to ensure that the small number of pupils who attend alternative provision in off-site educational establishments are kept safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils benefit from teachers' strong subject knowledge, and determination to plan engaging tasks that usually capture their interest. Typically, teachers ensure that pupils understand how to complete tasks well before they begin, which helps most get off to a swift and strong start.
- Pupils value the positive relationships they have with staff. Pupils feel confident to answer questions or to test their ideas out in discussion even if they are not sure about them. This helps teachers to understand and correct pupils' misconceptions, or to move pupils on when their knowledge is secure.
- Often, teachers ask pupils questions that encourage them to think deeply, to make connections between different things that they know, or to support their ideas and arguments. These and other techniques help teachers assess the extent of pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers use that information to plan activities that will help individuals to take the next steps in their learning.
- Teachers often promote pupils' speaking skills and confidence by planning activities that require them to share their ideas. Pupils listen respectfully to the contributions of others, and teachers often encourage them to respond, challenge or add to what it is that they have heard. They usually respond to this encouragement readily.
- The most able pupils told inspectors that they usually complete work that is appropriately challenging, including through completing 'gold' level and extension tasks. Scrutiny of pupils' work confirms this view and shows that teachers typically have high expectations of the most able, particularly in German, physical education and science.
- Teachers assess pupils' work accurately. Most staff follow the school's feedback policy, which is to help pupils understand the strengths in their work and how to improve it. Pupils told inspectors that this feedback is accessible and helpful to them.
- Teaching assistants typically work with teachers to plan appropriate support for pupils, including those with SEND. Teaching assistants support pupils by checking their understanding regularly. They ask questions that help pupils think things through and focus them on the task at hand.
- In mathematics, teaching does not enable pupils to apply their generally strong number skills to problem-solving and reasoning activities well enough.
- Some teachers do not enable pupils to develop their subject-specific extended writing skills sufficiently. This limits some pupils' ability to communicate what they know, or to set out their accounts or arguments clearly and precisely.
- Some pupils make less strong progress than others studying the same subject because successful teaching techniques are not always shared and adopted quickly and widely enough across departments.
- In a small number of instances, teaching is not engaging or appropriately challenging. At these times, a few pupils lose focus and call out or chat about things unrelated to their work. This slows the pace of learning.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils understand the importance of their work and want to do well. Most arrive at lessons punctually with the equipment that they need and settle down to work quickly. Pupils develop resilience because teachers encourage them to learn from their mistakes and to keep trying.
- Staff know individual pupils very well. They are sensitive to the contexts and needs of pupils who join the school having had negative experiences of education, or who face particularly challenging personal circumstances. Staff help these pupils to engage in school life and to learn well.
- Staff combine high expectations with individualised support, which enables these pupils to rise to the challenge. One pupil with SEND spoke for others when she told inspectors that 'The school cares about us being successful and makes sure that we do succeed. They understand me.'
- Pupils enjoy engaging in a wide variety of trips and visits, such as the recent trip to the Houses of Parliament, and other activities outside of formal lessons. Very many pupils take part in sporting activities regularly.
- Many activities promote pupils' personal development and build their confidence, such as leading and managing charity fund-raising activities. Pupils also raise issues through their student forum, and representatives meet regularly to feed back to senior leaders.
- Pupils told inspectors that there is little bullying, and that there is always someone that they can talk to at school, which is 'like a big family'. All pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe at school. Pupils value their ability to access counselling and other forms of support in 'The Sanctuary'.
- Through the school's 'essential life skills' and personal, social and health education sessions, pupils learn about a variety of risks and how to manage these, including during the recent 'online safety week'. Pupils also consider issues such as how to stay mentally healthy and recognise the characteristics of 'toxic relationships'.
- Independent careers guidance and visits from employers help pupils to make well-informed choices about which subjects to study and the kinds of courses or careers that success in them could lead to. The proportion who go on to sustained employment, education or training after leaving school is above the national average.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils engage with each other companionably during social times and are mutually respectful. They readily respond to instructions from staff, and in consequence the school is an orderly environment.

- Typically, pupils behave well in lessons, and when low-level disruption does occur, pupils usually respond quickly to teachers' instructions so that learning does not slow.
- Leaders identify any individuals whose behaviour is beginning to deteriorate quickly because they monitor the incidence of misbehaviour closely. Leaders work well with individual pupils and their parents when concerns arise. There have been very few occasions on which the school has needed to issue fixed-term exclusions in response to poor behaviour since the beginning of the current academic year.
- Staff are skilled in working with the small number of pupils who need support to improve their behaviour. In most cases, over time, this work enables pupils to manage their responses to situations they find challenging in an appropriate way. This helps them to learn without their behaviour preventing other pupils from doing so.
- Leaders, together with the school's attendance officers, have redoubled their efforts to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. Attendance, which was too low during the 2017/18 year, is now in line with the national average overall.
- A small number of teachers do not always respond to incidents of misbehaviour consistently, in line with the school's policy. On occasion, this means that low-level disruption is not tackled quickly enough.
- Leaders have recently introduced a new 'ready, respect and reward' behaviour policy that seeks to encourage all pupils to behave in ways that aid their learning. It is too soon to establish the full impact of these approaches.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision typically attend and behave well.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- From their different starting points, current pupils are making good progress in English, mathematics, science and most other subjects.
- In 2016 and 2017, pupils' progress was in line with the national average. In 2018, some pupils made insufficient progress and their attainment was too low. Several factors affected pupils' GCSE results. A large proportion of pupils joined the school midway through key stage 4 or later, some with a history of poor attendance or behaviour. Most pupils who attended the school from Year 9 onwards made good progress from their starting points.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that current pupils are making particularly strong progress in dance, drama, modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education.
- In 2018, a small number of disadvantaged pupils with very low attendance achieved poorly in their public examinations. Those whose attendance was high made strong progress, in line with that of other pupils with the same starting points.
- Most current disadvantaged pupils are attending school regularly. Those who need additional support benefit from one-to-one or small-group tuition, including in 'The ARC'. The school's monitoring information indicates most disadvantaged pupils are making good progress. Work in pupils' books supports this.

- Over half of the pupils at the school are from minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language. In 2018, these pupils' progress was in line with the national average for all pupils.
- Pupils with SEND typically make good progress from their individual starting points. The SEND team ensures that these pupils' needs are identified quickly, and that staff are both aware of them and able to meet them.
- A small number of pupils who join the school at Year 7 need help to improve their low literacy and/or numeracy skills. Leaders use catch-up funding well to support these pupils. Some older pupils' extended writing skills are insufficiently well developed.
- Leaders have made meeting the needs of the most able pupils a priority since the previous inspection. These pupils told inspectors that they usually complete work that is of an appropriate level of challenge. Work in these pupils' books confirmed this, and the high expectations that teachers have for these pupils. The large majority of these pupils are making good progress.
- Leaders' monitoring indicates that pupils who attend alternative provision usually make good progress on their courses.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Sixth-form students benefit from access to a broad range of vocational and academic courses. Recent changes to the advice students receive before they choose their options has ensured that most study subjects that are a good match for their interests and abilities.
- Overall, teaching in the sixth form is effective. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and a very secure understanding of the demands made upon students by the final examinations. Students appreciate the ability to practise answering sample questions and told inspectors that they find their teachers' feedback very helpful.
- Students readily engage in high-level discussion and debate within lessons when given the opportunity to do so. They appreciate the clear guidance their teachers give them about how to structure their extended written work so that their responses to challenging questions are coherent and compelling.
- Sixth-form leaders check the progress that individuals are making and act quickly to support those who are underperforming. Leaders have worked effectively to increase sixth-form students' attendance, which was previously a barrier to some making the progress they should. In consequence, most students progress from Year 12 to Year 13 and complete their courses.
- Overall, work in lessons and in students' files confirms that current students are making good progress. In 2018, students made particularly strong progress in their vocational qualifications, including in business and health and social care.
- Students who join the sixth form and who need to retake GCSE English or mathematics are well supported. Most make strong progress, and many improve their grades.
- Students feel safe and are safe in the sixth form. Students behave well because, as one put it, 'Everyone here wants to learn.' Students told inspectors that they appreciate

the excellent working relationships they have with their teachers, who they described as 'very approachable', and that they feel well supported.

- Students learn useful and age-appropriate information about how to stay safe and healthy, and how to manage their finances. This aspect of the curriculum helps to prepare sixth-form students for the next stage in their education or employment.
- Sixth-form students make a positive contribution to the rest of the school community, including by organising whole-school events such as the annual 'international day' that celebrates different languages, music and cultures. Most students act as mentors for younger pupils. Their excellent behaviour means that they serve as role models for younger pupils.
- A higher proportion of students who leave the sixth form progress to university than is the case nationally. Others go on to further education, apprenticeships or employment. Students consider that the advice and guidance they receive enable them to make successful applications.

School details

Unique reference number	109690
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10086775

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,055
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carole Bell
Headteacher	David Bailey
Telephone number	01234 342521
Website	www.biddenham.beds.sch.uk
Email address	enquiries@biddenham.beds.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 November 2015

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized secondary school.
- A higher than average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language.
- The extent to which pupils join and leave the school outside the normal points of transition is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is above average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average.

- A small number of pupils who remain on the school's roll are educated off-site in alternative provision within Bedford, at KWS Educational Services, E-Spired Centre of Excellence and Greys Education Centre.
- The number of pupils in key stage 3 is increasing as a reorganisation of education in Bedford is leading to the closure of middle schools.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a large number of lessons and looked at pupils' work in a very large number of books and files.
- Discussions were held with six groups of pupils and with many more pupils on an informal basis.
- A range of documents were examined, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, records of the work of the governing body, information on pupils' progress and documents relating to safeguarding, staff training, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher and other senior leaders, subject leaders, six members of the governing body and the school's local authority improvement partner.
- Inspectors took account of the 53 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, alongside 34 free-text responses. Inspectors also considered 242 responses to the pupil survey and the views of 86 members of staff who completed questionnaires.

Inspection team

Jason Howard, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sally Garrett	Ofsted Inspector
Caroline Dawes	Ofsted Inspector
Jenny Carpenter	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2019