

# Oakgrove School

Venturer Gate, Middleton, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK10 9JQ

## Inspection dates

26–27 June 2019

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders' relentless determination is tangible. They know their school extremely well, tackling any dips in performance promptly and rigorously. As a result, an ethos of high ambition is evident throughout, with pupils and staff rising to the challenge.
- The trust, supported by local governors, uses its knowledge and expertise very well. It holds leaders scrupulously to account for the impact of their work. Consequently, standards are high across the school.
- Pupils' welfare is a high priority. Meticulous safeguarding arrangements are used effectively by staff. As a result, pupils are safe and extremely well cared for.
- Pupils reach above-average levels of attainment across all phases of the school. The broad and inspiring curriculum meets their academic and pastoral needs equally well. Consequently, they are prepared very well for their future.
- Teaching is good across the school. Structures and resources help pupils to learn well. Useful training develops adults' teaching and leadership skills successfully. Improvement work is rightly focused on ensuring that teaching challenges pupils consistently to think deeply about the relevance of their learning.
- Additional funding is used appropriately. Disadvantaged pupils make above-average progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress, at least in line with their peers in school.
- Pupils' personal development is excellent. Highly effective careers education and guidance enable pupils to make appropriate and ambitious decisions about their next steps at the end of Years 11 and 13.
- Attendance and behaviour are excellent. Absence rates are consistently below the national average, including for vulnerable groups. Pupils demonstrate courtesy and respect, supported by effective school routines.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. Adults provide carefully for their needs, ensuring that they are safe and have diverse opportunities to learn. Children attain well.
- Sixth-form provision is good. Students value and benefit from the wider experiences that complement their subject-specific learning. Current students' progress is better than in the past because of leaders' recent actions.
- Leaders are ambitious to ensure that, for different groups, pupils' progress becomes consistently as impressive as their attainment.

## Full report

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

- Embed and develop current work to develop the consistent quality of teaching across the whole school, so that:
  - pupils of all abilities deepen their understanding of what they have learned, through routine opportunities to explain, reason and problem-solve
  - progress for students in the sixth form is consistently above average across the range of academic and vocational courses
  - the most able pupils routinely make good progress from their high starting points
  - pupils with SEND make consistently strong progress that enables them to catch up towards their peers in school.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- Since the last inspection, the school has changed notably, opening the primary phase almost three years ago. As the school has expanded rapidly, senior leaders have remained steadfast in their determination to help all pupils achieve of their very best. As a result, the ethos and high expectations firmly established in the secondary phase have extended successfully into the newer primary phase.
- Throughout the school, staff are highly ambitious for their pupils. They reflect honestly and accurately about the school's many strengths and the aspects that could be even better, sharing an understanding of the current priorities. Clear structures and processes support accountability at all levels, ensuring that areas of relative weakness are addressed promptly.
- Parents and carers have great confidence in the school's capacity to provide well for their children. Responses to parent surveys gathered by school leaders are highly positive. The local community's confidence in the quality of education is reflected in the very high number of applications for admission into Reception and Year 7 in September 2019.
- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching very carefully, focusing sensibly on agreed priorities linked to improving pupils' progress. They use what they know incisively to direct future training, for the whole staff, and where specific development needs have been identified. For instance, the emerging impact of current work to develop how well pupils are challenged through effective questioning was evident during this inspection.
- Throughout the school, pupils experience a diverse curriculum that builds securely on their learning over time. This equips them with the relevant knowledge, understanding and skills to sustain their early academic success as they move through the primary, secondary and sixth-form phases of the school. Increasingly, joint working between primary and secondary staff contributes usefully to this work. The curriculum remains broad throughout key stage 4, although leaders have appropriate plans to improve the opportunity for some pupils to participate in physical education (PE) which are currently somewhat limited.
- Leaders give careful thought to what pupils should learn aside from their taught subjects, being mindful of the skills and attributes necessary to contribute positively to society. Planned learning, built around the 'life skills programme', responds thoughtfully to the demands of the school's diverse social context, tackling relevant issues as and when they arise. Consequently, pupils demonstrate a mature understanding of spiritual, moral, social and culture issues, and of their place in modern Britain.
- Additional funding is used very well to support the pupils it is intended for. Well-thought-out leadership structures ensure that pupil premium spending is overseen carefully, with clear impact on pupils' academic outcomes. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make very good progress compared both with their peers in school and with other pupils nationally. Year 7 catch-up and sports premium funding is used equally well.

## **Governance of the school**

- Kingsbridge Educational Trust (KET), supported ably by the local governing body, holds school leaders rigorously to account for the difference their work makes to pupils at the school. Together, local governors and the trust are uncompromising in their determination for Oakgrove to be a beacon of best practice within and beyond the local community. They accept nothing less from leaders, teachers and pupils.
- Clear lines of accountability ensure that governance arrangements are highly effective. Governors keep themselves suitably informed about the school's work. They use their appropriately broad expertise well to challenge leaders about the impact of their work. Most recently, this has supported clear improvements for disadvantaged pupils and in the sixth form after disappointing outcomes in 2018.
- The trust contributes vital expertise to monitoring and development work across the school. Consequently, any emerging issues of concern are addressed swiftly and successfully. Experts from beyond the school provide a helpful external viewpoint that contributes well to the trust's understanding of standards in the school. As a result, no time is wasted in challenging leaders and the local governing body to address relevant priorities.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders are very well aware of the potential risks that may threaten pupils' safety. Where necessary, leaders work tenaciously with experts beyond the school to provide the extra help that some pupils and their families need. They make careful checks on adults working in the school, keeping meticulous records. Constant monitoring of this work enables them to keep systems and processes under constant review to ensure that they remain fit for purpose.
- Staff demonstrate a deep awareness of pupils' needs and are highly vigilant in their safeguarding role. Leaders ensure that staff receive pertinent ongoing training that is relevant to the emerging needs of the school community, rigorously assessing the impact of this work. As the school has grown, leaders have wisely invested in developing the capacity within safeguarding systems so that the high standards already established in the school have been sustained and enhanced. Consequently, staff act in a timely way that maximises the impact of their work on the most vulnerable pupils in the school.
- Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from rich experiences that help them to learn how to keep themselves safe and manage relevant risks. Primary-phase pupils talked knowledgeably to inspectors about regular, age-appropriate advice and guidance that helps them to make sensible choices about their own safety. In the secondary phase, learning across the curriculum and through the 'life skills programme' is enhanced through a carefully planned sequence of assemblies and visits from local groups, such as a recent workshop on the risks of knives and gang culture. Pupils' mental health needs are supported successfully through relevant learning sessions, especially in the upper school.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Pupils respond consistently well to leaders' high expectations for their learning and behaviour in class. They work sensitively and supportively together, which benefits them all. Consequently, the environment throughout the school is highly conducive to learning, with time used well.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They plan learning activities that build pupils' knowledge securely over time. Learning and resources are structured carefully, so that work is accessible to, and suitable for, different groups of learners.
- Typically, adults use questioning well to check what pupils have learned, identifying and addressing gaps in their knowledge. Where this is most effective, adults' questioning draws out pupils' thinking precisely and persistently, encouraging them to think more about what they are learning. Opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding by connecting and using their prior learning are developing across the school.
- Phonics and early reading are taught well. Pupils develop their phonics skills securely at an early stage, through carefully structured time in lessons. They use what they learn to read unfamiliar words accurately, accessing suitably challenging and engaging books. As pupils' reading fluency develops, teachers ensure that pupils can understand the text, using well-planned approaches to improve their comprehension.
- Pupils' mathematical fluency develops convincingly over time. In the primary phase, useful resources and learning strategies help pupils to build their knowledge of number securely over time, enabling them to access their future learning easily. In the secondary phase, pupils' accuracy and fluency remain consistently strong. Work in pupils' books showed limited evidence of pupils using what they knew in order to reason or explain.
- Pupils present their work carefully, demonstrating pride and a desire to do well. They commit to improving their work, using helpful feedback from their teachers in line with the school policy. They maintain similarly high standards across the breadth of the curriculum.
- Pupils with SEND are supported sufficiently well with their learning. Additional adults help them to access their learning successfully, promoting positive attitudes. As a result, pupils with SEND make progress that is at least in line with their peers, although not necessarily sufficient to catch up.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Outstanding**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils flourish because of extensive and carefully planned opportunities that nurture their self-awareness and strengthen their understanding of the world they live in.
- High-quality careers information and guidance is a strong feature of the school. Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from a comprehensive, coherent and timely

programme of support that informs them extremely well about their future choices. Pupils value the useful information they receive, making effective decisions about their key stage 4 options as a result.

- Leaders' careful plans meet pupils' welfare needs sensitively. Relationships established in the lower part of the school are nurtured over time, with deliberate actions promoting a shared ethos across the whole school community, despite being on two different sites. Pupils spoke very positively to inspectors about the continuous care and concern that staff have for their welfare.
- A very small proportion of pupils in key stage 4 access their learning via alternative provision at The Bridge Academy. Leaders manage this arrangement very carefully, ensuring that it is in the best interests of the pupils involved and maximises their opportunity to access education successfully. Pupils typically thrive under these arrangements, which support their welfare as well as their education.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Typically, pupils conduct themselves extremely well, supported by adults' consistently high expectations and behaviour management systems that are understood by everyone.
- In lessons, pupils are polite, respectful and engaged in purposeful learning. They work well together, listening thoughtfully to each other and showing respect for each other's views. As a result, learning time is rarely interrupted.
- Breaktimes and lunchtimes are managed well. Despite very large numbers of pupils, particularly on the secondary site, the atmosphere is warm and friendly. Pupils are supervised carefully, supported by the evident warm relationships with their teachers. Pupils report their school as a safe place to be.
- Pupils sustain above-average levels of attendance because they enjoy being at school. Robust systems and routines enable leaders to act quickly in the rare instances where absence from school is a concern, resulting in improvements. Expectations for punctuality are equally clear and are understood by pupils.
- Bullying is rare and is reported to be dealt with very well by adults. A very small proportion of pupils and their parents reported concerns about unkind talk, although this was not evident during the inspection. Most said that leaders act decisively in response to any issues brought to their attention.
- Alternative provision is highly effective in supporting pupils at risk of permanent exclusion. Pupils attend regularly and modify their behaviour, enabling them to remain engaged with education.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Throughout the school, pupils attain highly. The proportion who meet at least the standard expected at the end of each key stage is routinely at least in line with, and often above, the comparative national average. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for their next steps in learning, gaining secure and relevant knowledge, skills and understanding across a broad range of subjects.

- Although attainment is consistently high, patterns in progress are more variable across the school. Progress for low-prior-attaining pupils is, overall, stronger than for their high-prior-attaining peers. In the primary phase, pupils make good progress, with the first Year 6 cohort on track to attain well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. In comparison, progress by the end of key stage 4 has been broadly average for the past two years, albeit with indications that it is stronger this year.
- Consistently high proportions of pupils meet the standard of the phonics check by the end of Year 1. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is similarly strong by the end of key stage 1. As a result, pupils are able to access the wider curriculum in key stage 2 and beyond.
- Typically, by the end of Year 11, pupils attain a broad range of good-quality qualifications that prepare them well for the future. Higher proportions of pupils enter for, and attain, the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) suite of qualifications than is the case nationally. The quality of pupils' academic outcomes is evident in the very high proportion of pupils who secure and sustain appropriately ambitious education, employment or training opportunities when they leave school aged 16 or 18.
- Over time, leaders' focused work has improved outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Typically, they make above-average progress across most year groups and subjects, doing at least as well as their peers in school. Their work is of a comparably high standard as that of other pupils in the school. Where pockets of relative underperformance occur, such as currently in parts of key stage 2, leaders' rigorous actions address this promptly and effectively.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress over time because teaching and additional support meet their needs well. Where progress is stronger, such as in Year 7, pupils with SEND are catching up towards their peers, but this is not consistently the case across the school.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision gain high-quality qualifications in line with their ability. This enables them to remain successfully engaged with education, employment and training once they leave full-time school.

### Early years provision

**Good**

- Children are prepared well for their future learning by their experience in the early years. Consistently good practice across the Nursery and Reception Years enables children to flourish.
- Leaders reflect accurately on the quality of provision. They have established consistent routines that build children's confidence and engage them in their own learning. Planned opportunities for staff from both year groups to work and talk together support the shared culture and expectations that are evident across the early years setting, matching those seen in other parts of the school.
- Adults know children well. They plan learning activities that support children successfully in developing their knowledge and skills across the breadth of the early years curriculum. This supports children's good progress and their preparation for more formal teaching in Year 1.
- Parents are positive about their children's experiences in the early years, reporting an

effective partnership between school and home. Parents value the planned opportunities for them to engage with staff and come into school to see their children learning. Children's health, well-being and education are promoted successfully as a result.

- Warm and positive relationships are evident throughout. Children interact well with each other, sharing equipment happily as they play and learn. Planned opportunities enable children to find out about the people in their community and the diversity of the country they live in, such as through learning about Diwali and engaging in a topic on 'people who help us'.
- Children's welfare is a high priority for all staff. Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet the high standards that are evident across the rest of the school. Children are confident to speak to adults about any help that they may need.
- Teaching meets children's needs consistently well. The stimulating environment, both inside and outside, is used well to engage children in a variety of activities that meet their needs appropriately. As a result, children learn purposefully.
- Children's learning is complemented well by their interactions with the adults around them. Whole-class teaching, such as in phonics and early mathematics, is structured carefully and delivered well, demonstrating adults' secure understanding of how to develop children's knowledge over time. During child-initiated learning time, adults make effective use of opportunities to extend children's understanding, by asking them thoughtfully about what they are doing.
- Children learn well during their time in the early years. The proportion who reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year is consistently above the national average. Leaders rightly identify that outcomes in writing are not quite as strong as they are in other areas of the curriculum.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

**Good**

- Effective careers information and guidance ensures that students join the sixth form because it meets their learning and pastoral needs suitably well. Leaders' thoughtful approach ensures that the curriculum provides an appropriate balance of relevant academic and vocational courses. Consequently, high proportions of students who join the sixth form at the start of Year 12 remain to the end of Year 13 and are successful in their studies.
- Students benefit from teaching that is consistently good, building on the strength of the experience they have lower down the school. Students work confidently under the skilled direction of their teachers, who enable them to take increased ownership of their own learning over time. Students gain a secure understanding of what they are taught, reflecting on what they know to draw increasingly complex conclusions as their learning develops.
- In the recent past, outcomes at the end of Year 13 showed a dip in progress compared with previous years. Leaders responded robustly and effectively, identifying and addressing the reasons behind this. As a result, progress for students currently in the sixth form has improved and is currently in line with expectations, both for academic and vocational subjects.

- Attainment in the sixth form matches strengths seen in the rest of the school. Students' outcomes in biology, chemistry, history, geography and politics are particularly good. High proportions of students gain qualifications that enable them to move on to university or high-quality apprenticeship providers that meet their ambitious career aspirations.
- Very small numbers of students join the sixth form needing to resit their key stage 4 qualifications in English and mathematics. The extra help they receive enables them to make good progress, especially in English, sometimes persevering to attain above the grade 4 that they are required to reach.
- Opportunities for learning beyond the taught curriculum are wide and varied, with useful opportunities for personal development. These include volunteering programmes that support the wider school community. Students' engagement with these activities is monitored closely by leaders to check that they are benefiting equally from all of the learning experiences encompassed by the 16 to 19 study programme requirements.
- Students are well cared for. They value how well teachers support them, both with their learning and with other issues that cause them concern. Staff monitor students closely, enabling them to act quickly if concerns around learning, behaviour or attendance arise.

## School details

Unique reference number	136454
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10088076

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	All-through
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	2,043
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	232
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Megan Crawford
Headteacher	Ian Tett
Telephone number	01908 545 300
Website	<a href="http://www.oakgrove.milton-keynes.sch.uk/">www.oakgrove.milton-keynes.sch.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:oakgrove@oakgrove.school">oakgrove@oakgrove.school</a>
Date of previous inspection	8–9 May 2013

## Information about this school

- Oakgrove is a very large academy for pupils aged three to 19. It opened in 2011, when the predecessor school converted to become an academy. The primary phase of the school, which includes a nursery for pupils aged three and above, opened in September 2016 and is situated a short walk from the secondary school campus.
- The school has grown rapidly since it was last inspected. As well as the new primary phase, each year group in the secondary phase, except in Year 11, now has 300 pupils. The sixth form is also increasing in size. The school is significantly oversubscribed for entry to both the primary and secondary phases for September 2019.

- The school is part of the Kingsbridge Educational Trust, which incorporates three other schools in Milton Keynes. The trust has responsibility for the school's governance, much of which it delegates to a local governing body. The school also includes the Innovate Teaching School partnership.
- Just over half of the pupils are of White British origin. An above-average number of minority ethnic groups are represented in the school. More pupils are believed to speak English as an additional language than is the case nationally.
- There is a breakfast and after-school club based at the primary school that provides wrap-around care for primary-aged pupils.
- A very small number of pupils in the secondary phase attend The Bridge Academy, which is an alternative provision run by the local authority for pupils with behavioural or medical needs.

## Information about this inspection

- This was an inspection under no formal designation, carried out under section 8 of the Education Act. It took place because the school, which was exempt from routine inspection due to being judged outstanding, has since undergone significant change through adding a primary phase. The inspection was therefore treated as if it was an inspection under section 5 of the Education Act.
- Inspectors visited lessons across the school to observe learning, talk to pupils and look at their work. Some of these visits were carried out alongside school leaders. Additionally, inspectors carried out brief visits to tutor periods, an assembly and the breakfast club. Together with school leaders, they reviewed a sample of pupils' work from a range of subjects and year groups.
- Meetings were held with groups of leaders, teachers and pupils to discuss standards in the school. The lead inspector also met with two representatives of the Kingsbridge Educational Trust and spoke to both the chair of the local governing body and the secondary school's improvement partner on the telephone. A member of the inspection team spoke on the telephone with a representative of The Bridge Academy.
- Inspectors viewed a range of relevant documentation relating to all aspects of the school. This included documents available on the school website and those that are publicly available, such as published performance information. They also scrutinised safeguarding records, and leaders' information about the quality of teaching, attendance, behaviour and academic achievement.
- An inspector spoke to a small number of parents at the primary school site on the morning of the second day of inspection. Inspectors also considered pupil and parent survey responses provided by the school.

## Inspection team

Kathryn Moles, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maxine McDonald-Taylor	Her Majesty's Inspector
Christopher Crouch	Ofsted Inspector
Patrick Harty	Ofsted Inspector
Francois Walker	Ofsted Inspector

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