

# Inspection of a good school: Mark Rutherford School

Wentworth Drive, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK41 8PX

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Inspection dates:

10–11 March 2020

## **Outcome**

Mark Rutherford School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that one or more areas may be declining, as set out below.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils enjoy school. They feel safe, well supported and cared for. They get along well with other pupils and members of staff. As a result, they attend regularly and arrive promptly.

Most pupils behave very well. They move between lessons purposefully and sensibly. The school is calm and well ordered. Bullying is rare at the school. When it does happen, members of staff work hard to resolve issues and ensure that incidents do not reoccur. There are lots of visits and clubs that are well attended.

Pupils do not always benefit as they should from the school's curriculum. It is not planned well enough in some subjects. Not enough is expected from pupils in Year 7. Pupils are not given enough help to remember important information.

The sixth form is a strength of the school. Sixth-form students are excellent role models and support activities throughout the school. We saw sixth-form students helping primary school pupils carry out science experiments themed around an imaginary crime scene.

The school is a very tolerant and inclusive community. The Nightingale Centre, for pupils with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), is well integrated into the life of the school. This helps support all pupils' appreciation of diversity.

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

School leaders want every pupil to do well. They are currently changing the school's curriculum in order to meet this ambition. This is because the way that learning is organised currently limits pupils' achievement.

Leaders have made sure that the pupils in Year 7 are well supported and cared for. They have designed lessons that support pupils' move from primary school. However, leaders have not made sure that these pupils make a fast-enough start in their learning in subjects such as history and design and technology (DT).

In recent years, pupils have not done as well as they should have in their GCSE examinations overall. Some pupils struggle to revise effectively. This is because not enough has been done to help pupils to learn how to memorise important information earlier in their school career. The school's current focus on how pupils remember information ('making it stick') has not had enough time to make a difference.

In the sixth form, students achieve very well. They benefit from well-planned lessons that are interesting and engaging. Teachers have a high level of expertise in the subjects they teach.

Senior leaders now have a realistic picture of what is working well in the school and what needs to be improved further. They have introduced systems to ensure curriculum leaders are monitoring their own areas well. They have done this without increasing the amount of work that teachers have to do. Teachers feel well supported and believe that leaders are actively thinking about staff well-being.

Pupils become confident and independent young people. They thrive on the wide range of interesting sports, arts and technology clubs that they can attend at the start of school, at lunchtime and after school. They are not so well supported in their personal development by the planned series of lessons they have in personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). These are delivered through a range of other school subjects. Leaders find it hard to know how well pupils are learning what they need to know.

Pupils behave themselves well and bullying is rare. Teachers have a firm understanding of what to do when pupils do not do what they should. As a result, pupils are not usually distracted from their learning in lessons. School leaders are clear that there are certain types of behaviour that will not be tolerated at the school. Since the last inspection, more pupils than is typical in most schools have been permanently excluded because of their behaviour. Leaders have not successfully reduced these exclusions.

The percentage of pupils being entered for the English Baccalaureate has declined in recent years. In 2019 it was below the national average. This proportion has been held back by the number of pupils taking a modern foreign language at GCSE. Leaders have acted to reverse this decline. They have changed the guidance they give pupils when choosing their options. All pupils now study Spanish, French and Italian in Year 7 to help them find a language that is right for them.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Teachers ensure that these pupils can take part fully in lessons.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a vigilant culture of safeguarding. Staff are quick to follow up any concerns. Leaders ensure that safeguarding training is thorough and regularly updated. Staff liaise well with outside agencies and share information effectively. This means that pupils get the support that they require quickly. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe.

Leaders undertake all necessary recruitment checks. However, leaders and trustees have not ensured that the record of these checks has been maintained as carefully as it needs to be. This has not put pupils at risk. Leaders acted decisively to correct the minor errors that we identified.

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

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum that pupils follow in Year 7 in some subjects such as history and DT is not ambitious enough. As a result, pupils do not know or understand enough about these subjects by the end of their first year and this restricts their progress moving through the school. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum for all subjects is equally ambitious for all pupils.
- The curriculum does not incorporate sufficient opportunities for pupils to remember and recall key information during key stage 3. As a result, pupils find it difficult to remember earlier learning when they come to revise for their GCSEs. Leaders need to ensure that pupils learn the skills necessary to master key information earlier, so they can recall it readily and fluently.
- The PSHE curriculum is not planned or delivered coherently enough. Leaders cannot evaluate how well the curriculum is being implemented or how well it contributes to pupils' personal development. Leaders should revise the PSHE curriculum, so they are able to monitor how effectively pupils are learning what they should.
- School leaders have not successfully reduced the number of isolated, but serious, incidents of poor behavior leading to the permanent exclusion of pupils. As a result, the number of permanent exclusions since the previous inspection has been much higher than the national average. Leaders need to act more proactively to address the causes of these incidents.

## 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 a section 8 inspection of a good or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection.

Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Mark Rutherford School, to be good on 14–15 November 2012.

## **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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139160
<b>Local authority</b>	Bedford
<b>Inspection number</b>	10110261
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,255
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	248
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair</b>	Joseph Campbell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Julie Bloor
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.markrutherford.beds.sch.uk">www.markrutherford.beds.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	3 March 2016

## Information about this school

- When it was last inspected the school admitted a small number of pupils into Year 7 and the majority of pupils entered in Year 9. The school now admits its full cohort in Year 7, although pupils currently in Years 9 to 11 were admitted under the previous arrangements.
- The school has an enhanced resource provision for pupils with ASD. The provision currently has 16 pupils aged 11 to 18.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school has been led by an acting headteacher from the second half of the autumn term of this academic year.

## Information about this inspection

- We did deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, science and business studies. We met with the curriculum leaders, visited lessons, held meetings with teachers and with pupils, and looked at pupils' work.
- We held meetings with the acting headteacher, acting deputy headteachers and other senior staff. We met with representatives of the board of trustees and two representatives of the local authority. We spoke to school staff and pupils around the school.
- We looked at the single central record of checks on all employees. We talked to staff responsible for leading safeguarding in the school, scrutinised safeguarding files, examined how the school followed up concerns about pupils and checked that staff were suitably trained in safeguarding.
- We took account of 113 contributions made by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, which included 111 free-text responses, 72 responses to the staff survey and 160 responses to the pupil survey. We looked at a number of emails sent to the school and spoke to one parent by telephone.

## Inspection team

Paul Lawrence, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
John Craig	Ofsted Inspector
David Hutton	Ofsted Inspector

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