

# Inspection of Bushey Meads School

Coldharbour Lane, Bushey, Hertfordshire WD23 4PA

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| Inspection dates:         | 14 and 15 January 2025      |
| The quality of education  | <b>Requires improvement</b> |
| Behaviour and attitudes   | <b>Requires improvement</b> |
| Personal development      | <b>Good</b>                 |
| Leadership and management | <b>Requires improvement</b> |
| Sixth-form provision      | <b>Good</b>                 |
| Previous inspection grade | Good                        |

The executive principal of this school is Jeremy Turner. This school is part of the Bushey St James Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Jeremy Turner, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sam Russell.

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

In many places, the school is a calm place to learn. While most pupils behave well, some pupils have mixed experiences. A minority of pupils can disturb the learning of others. Pupils are frustrated that some of their peers are not living up to the school's clearly articulated values. While most staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, the school's behaviour approaches are not used consistently well.

Many pupils have confidence in staff to sort out serious issues. Bullying is dealt with effectively. Prejudicial language is not tolerated. The school is inclusive. Most pupils have positive relationships with staff and with each other.

Pupils, and students in the sixth form, are confident, articulate individuals. They take pride in the range of high-quality leadership opportunities available to them. Students in the sixth form, for example, help younger pupils with their reading. Pupils enjoy the rich variety of trips and experiences on offer. School clubs help to promote pupils' engagement in science, technology, computing and mathematics.

Students in the sixth form achieve well. This is because the curriculum is well taught and enables students, of all abilities, to succeed. However, weaknesses in the curriculum for pupils in key stages 3 and 4 mean that some pupils do not fulfil their potential.

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

Since the previous inspection, the quality of education has declined. A range of factors, including high staff turnover and recruitment issues mean that pupils are not achieving as well as they should.

Leaders are beginning to stabilise staffing. Nevertheless, there is inconsistency in how well staff support pupils' learning and progress through the curriculum. In the stronger areas of the curriculum, staff deliver effective lessons. They choose engaging activities that help pupils to learn. This is not the case everywhere. In some core areas of the curriculum, high staff turnover has led to variability in how the curriculum is delivered. At times, checks on learning are not always used well. Sometimes, staff do not spot quickly enough where pupils are struggling with their learning. Consequently, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not learn as well as they should.

Despite the issues, the curriculum itself is ambitious. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, access a range of interesting subjects. The sixth-form curriculum is working well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and so quickly pick up students' misconceptions. Students have good attitudes to their studies. They are prepared well for the future.

Support for pupils with SEND is a school priority. In the school's specially resourced provision, 'The Laurel', leaders carefully identify what help and support pupils with SEND need to succeed. As a result, these pupils access an effective, bespoke curriculum suited to their individual needs. The school ensures that, overall, staff get accurate information

about pupils' specific needs. Despite this, pupils with SEND are affected by the same weaknesses in the curriculum as their peers.

The school, with the support of the trust, recently improved its approach to supporting pupils with their reading. Pupils who fall behind access appropriate support to help them catch up. Reading in 'character development' time raises the profile and importance of enjoying books.

While many pupils behave well, the behaviour of a minority disrupts some parts of school life. The new behaviour approach is hampered by inconsistencies in how staff uses it. While everyone knows the behaviour expectations, sanctions are not always applied consistently. Suspensions remain high as the school continues to deal with pockets of poor behaviour. Despite very recent improvements, several pupils and parents remain frustrated about how learning is disrupted. This is echoed by a significant minority of staff.

Pupils receive clear messages about the value of attending school regularly. Leaders have increased the robustness of their attendance procedures. Pupils' attendance is improving gradually as a result. The school has developed some effective ways of supporting pupils with complex needs to improve their attendance. Nonetheless, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils remains low.

The personal development programme is a strength of the school. Pupils access an appropriate careers programme to support them with their next steps. An improved personal, social, health and economic education programme, linked to 'character development' time, ensures pupils are building their understanding about important topics, such as managing finances and healthy relationships.

Trustees and leaders are well aware of the issues in the school. They have recently built capacity to support the school to improve. There have been some green shoots of improvement, for instance around attendance. There is still, however, much more work to do to improve the school for the benefit of all pupils.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- Some pupils' behaviour disrupts learning across parts of the school. Staff do not use the school's behaviour system consistently well. This means that poor behaviour disrupts learning in some lessons. The school should ensure its behaviour system is implemented consistently well so pupils' behaviour improves and learning is not disrupted.

- It is too often the case that disadvantaged pupils are persistently absent. This hinders how well these pupils learn and they miss out on school life. The school should establish an effective strategy for improving the attendance of this group of pupils. Sometimes, teachers do not effectively check pupils' knowledge and understanding. At times, teachers do not spot errors and move on when pupils are not ready. This means pupils do not learn as well as they could. The school should ensure that staff have the necessary support to consistently implement the curriculum well.

## 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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

|                                                   |                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b>                    | 137872                                                             |
| <b>Local authority</b>                            | Hertfordshire                                                      |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                          | 10345328                                                           |
| <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>        | 1,238                                                              |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b> | 259                                                                |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>                      | Board of trustees                                                  |
| <b>Chair of trust</b>                             | Sam Russell                                                        |
| <b>CEO of the trust</b>                           | Jeremy Turner                                                      |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                                | Jeremy Turner (executive principal)                                |
| <b>Website</b>                                    | <a href="http://www.busheymeads.org.uk">www.busheymeads.org.uk</a> |
| <b>Dates of previous inspection</b>               | 12 and 13 November 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the Bushey St. James trust.
- The school runs a specialist resource provision called 'The Laurel' for up to 20 pupils with speech, language and communication needs.
- The school uses one registered and two unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Year 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with a range of leaders, including the executive principal, the head of standards and other senior leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, science, art and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with those responsible for governance, which included meeting with a range of trustees and governors.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of pupils and considered the results of Ofsted's pupil survey. Inspectors spent time with pupils at breaktimes to observe behaviour and spoke to pupils and sixth-form students about school life.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of staff and considered 108 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- The lead inspector considered the 295 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, including the free-text responses.

## Inspection team

|                                  |                         |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Damian Loneragan, lead inspector | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Cathy Barr                       | Ofsted Inspector        |
| David Piercy                     | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Michael Skelly                   | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Caren Earp                       | Ofsted Inspector        |

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