

Inspection of Kettering Buccleuch Academy

Weekley Glebe Road, Kettering, Northamptonshire NN16 9NS

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 October 2021

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Good

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils achieve well at this popular and thriving school. Students perform exceptionally well in the sixth form. Pupils, including children in the early years, benefit from a vibrant learning environment. The school is inclusive. Most pupils say they are happy to be there. Sixth-form students are particularly proud to attend. Leaders are highly ambitious for pupils and staff. The achievement of pupils in the primary phase has improved. However, the achievement of pupils in this phase is not as strong as in the secondary phase, particularly in reading and writing.

Pupils are well cared for. They feel safe and attend well. Pupils report that bullying rarely occurs. If it does, they are confident that it will be swiftly dealt with by staff. Relationships are positive. Pupils understand how to conduct themselves respectfully. The new 'bin the banter' campaign and tutor-time sessions contribute successfully to the school's positive ethos. Pupils understand leaders' expectations that learning is 'disruption free'.

Parents recognise that the school has improved rapidly over recent years. A high majority would recommend the school. As one parent wrote, 'Five years ago I would not have sent my child here, but now I would not send them anywhere else.'

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

A culture of high expectation connects all aspects of school life. Leaders know the school well. They ensure that the school's values of respect, determination and ambition are consistently applied. Governors are highly skilled and well informed. They are very effective in holding leaders to account. The school is well supported by the trust. School leaders support many developments in the trust.

At the heart of leaders' ambition is a commitment to the professional development of staff. Leaders have maintained, as far as possible, the school's usual curriculum throughout the pandemic. The school's vision is one of 'Keep up, not catch up.' Parents value the school's approach to communication. Many have shared their praise for the school's virtual 'town hall' meetings, for example.

Staff morale is highly positive. Staff say that they value leaders' consideration of their workload and well-being. One member of staff wrote, 'I have never worked at a school with such inspirational leadership.' Teachers who are at the early stages of their careers feel equally well supported.

Subject leaders have comprehensively reviewed the curriculum. They have worked together across the primary and secondary phases to plan the curriculum from Reception Year to the sixth form. These plans show the 'powerful' knowledge that pupils need and when they need it. Some plans are at an early stage of implementation. In the early years and the primary phase, leaders have recently implemented a new phonics programme. Most staff teach this programme well in Reception Year and key stage 1. Books are well matched to the sounds that pupils

are learning. Pupils' reading and writing skills are stronger than has been the case in the past. However, pupils do not all achieve consistently well in all subjects in the primary phase. Sometimes, pupils are given the answers to questions before having enough time to think for themselves. Sometimes, learning is moved on too quickly before all pupils are secure in their understanding. In the secondary school, leaders have recently improved the curriculum plans for design and technology. In the past, pupils have not achieved well in this subject because leaders' plans lacked ambition. Leaders have acted swiftly to address this. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this work.

Teachers explain new content well. Resources are of a high quality. Teachers often check pupils' understanding of important knowledge. They use their strong subject knowledge to question pupils effectively. In most subjects, they identify and correct misunderstandings quickly. Precise teaching in phonics is helping weaker readers gain the skills and confidence they need. Staff provide extra and timely support to those pupils who need it. In most subjects, teachers adapt the curriculum to support the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders ensure that all pupils have an equal right to learn the full curriculum.

Leaders have done much to promote reading. They have put into place dedicated time so that all pupils have opportunities to foster a love of reading. Leaders ensure that the books pupils read capture a range of moral, social and cultural issues. In the primary phase and early years, most teachers enthuse pupils during story-time sessions. Weekly 'bedrock vocabulary' sessions help older pupils to be confident with the terminology they need to use in their lessons.

The curriculum for personal development is strong in all year groups. Leaders have designed it to help develop pupils' character. In Reception Year, teachers encourage children to become independent and inquisitive, including during playtime. In all year groups, tutors ensure that pupils join in discussion and debate about topical issues. Examples include climate change and the impact of public protests. These opportunities promote pupils' understanding of British values, including democracy and individual liberty. The curriculums for relationships, sex and health education and careers guidance are equally well planned. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps and life in modern Britain. The school meets the requirements of the Baker clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Students are thriving in the sixth form. They are professional in their conduct and appearance. Leaders are highly aspirational for students. Students say that staff are always available to provide extra support when needed. The school's 'global learning' programme strongly supports students' wider personal development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained. They have a precise understanding of their responsibilities. Leaders have established a strong culture of vigilance. Staff ensure that pupils receive the help and support they need. Leaders take swift action to protect pupils, including when concerns arise about the conduct of adults. Leaders have a detailed understanding of the risks in the local area. They work well with external agencies. Leaders use their analysis to inform the curriculum. Leaders' engagement with parents is a distinctive feature. For example, workshops help parents to understand the role of young people in gang crime. Regular parent bulletins raise awareness of important safety issues.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, including early reading, teachers sometimes give pupils the answers to questions too quickly. Sometimes, pupils are not given enough time to think for themselves. Some pupils do not achieve as well as they might, particularly in reading and writing. Leaders recognise that there is more to do to ensure that pupils' achievement in the primary school is further strengthened. Leaders should ensure that their new plans rapidly build on the improvements already made. Teachers should ensure that they consistently check pupils are secure in their understanding before moving learning on to the next activity.
- Until recently, curriculum plans for design and technology did not meet the ambition set out in the national curriculum. In the past, pupils have not been able to study this subject in depth. Leaders' current plans for design and technology are new and only recently implemented. Leaders should ensure that their plans to deliver the curriculum for this subject are fully implemented and reviewed to ensure they are as ambitious as other subjects in the school.

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.

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

Unique reference number	135966
Local authority	North Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10200047
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1865
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	267
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair	Paul Clarke
Principal	Dino Di Salvo
Website	www.kba.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 and 11 January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the United Learning Trust, which it joined in September 2009.
- The school uses three registered alternative education providers for a very small number of pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the principal and other members of the senior leadership team. Meetings were also held with leaders of the sixth form, early years and the school's coordinators for the provision of pupils with SEND.
- A meeting was held with the chair and vice chair of the local governing body. The lead inspector also met with two representatives from the trust.
- Inspectors spoke to many groups of pupils, formally and informally, around the school site, across all key stages.
- To check the school's arrangements for safeguarding, the lead inspector met with the senior designated safeguarding lead and the school's welfare and safeguarding manager. Policies, procedures and record-keeping were scrutinised, including the checks made for the recruitment of staff.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation, including policies and record-keeping for behaviour management, exclusions, attendance and pupil mobility. Inspectors also reviewed the quality of records for pupils who are looked after by children's services in the local authority.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in reading, art, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages and science. In each subject, inspectors visited lessons, scrutinised pupils' work and held discussions with subject leaders, teachers and pupils in all key stages. Inspectors also visited several tutor-time sessions to evaluate the quality of the school's provision for pupils' wider personal development.
- Inspectors considered 208 responses to Ofsted Parent View, including 201 free-text comments. The lead inspector reviewed 164 responses to Ofsted's survey for staff.

Inspection team

Chris Stevens, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Farhan Adam	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Burton	Ofsted Inspector
Kate Beale	Ofsted Inspector
Matthew Sammy	Ofsted Inspector
Jason Brooks	Ofsted Inspector

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