

Great Barford C of E Primary Academy

Silver Street, Great Barford, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK44 3HZ

Inspection dates

21–22 February 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Over time, significant challenges have hindered leaders' ability to maintain high standards and ensure that pupils receive a good education.
- There is a lack of precision in development planning and leaders do not rigorously check and evaluate the school's work. As a result, leaders' actions for improvement are not based on a clear or accurate view of the school.
- The academy council has not been effective in holding school leaders to account for the progress that pupils make. Members' checks on aspects of the school's work have not been thorough enough.
- Although current pupils' outcomes are improving, they are not yet good. Standards are not as high as they should be given pupils' starting points.
- Many middle leaders are relatively new to their roles. They do not yet fully contribute in leading improvements within the school.
- The quality of teaching across the school is not consistently good. Not all teachers have high enough expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. Teachers do not consistently teach lessons that meet the needs and abilities of pupils.
- Teachers do not routinely provide the most able pupils with activities that challenge and stretch their learning. This slows their progress.
- Leaders and the academy council have not ensured that the curriculum provides pupils with enough opportunities to develop their personal and social skills.
- Leaders do not engage effectively with parents and carers. Consequently, parents do not always understand the reasons for leaders' decisions or know what difference leaders are making.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders, the academy council and the trust are ambitious for the school. Their determination is starting to make a positive difference to pupils' achievement.
- Children get a positive start in the early years. Good teaching and effective leadership ensure that all children achieve well.
- Teaching assistants provide high-quality support for pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They play well together at playtimes.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and governance by ensuring that:
 - the school’s self-evaluation is appropriately self-critical and school improvement plans include clear and focused priorities, so leaders and the academy council can monitor the work of the school more effectively
 - the academy council’s skills are sharpened so that members use school performance information effectively and hold school leaders stringently to account
 - the skills of middle leaders are developed so that they can improve the quality of teaching and raise standards in their areas of responsibility
 - communication with families is both timely and of a high quality, so that parents have confidence in, and fully understand, the reasons behind school leaders’ decisions.
- Improve the quality of teaching and raise standards by ensuring that:
 - teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve across a full range of subjects
 - teachers routinely set work which challenges and stretches the most able pupils to achieve as well as they can
 - teaching effectively promotes pupils’ personal development and enables them to develop their social skills in different contexts and situations so they are being well prepared for adult life.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since 2017, the school has undergone significant changes, including becoming an academy, expanding to a primary school and becoming a Church of England school. This has taken a considerable amount of time and resources. Following the extensive recruitment of new staff, leaders have not ensured that the quality of teaching is strong enough throughout the school to enable pupils to make good progress.
- Leaders' strategic overview is not sharp enough. It is not closely aligned to pupils' academic achievement. Leaders have identified priorities and have outlined the subsequent actions to address these. However, neither the improvement plans, nor the evaluation of actions taken, are specific or accurate in all areas. This means that leaders do not have a clear enough understanding of what is effective and what is not, to inform future planning.
- The headteacher, supported by the assistant headteacher, is determined to do what is right for pupils and their families. She is steering improvements across many areas of school life. Despite clear signs of positive change, these are in their infancy and so pupils' outcomes and the quality of teaching still require improvement.
- Most middle leaders are new to their posts, taking on their roles either last year or more recently. Although eager and committed, they are still developing the leadership skills they need to have a noticeable impact on the quality of teaching and standards in their areas of responsibility.
- The curriculum is organised to ensure that a breadth of subjects beyond English and mathematics is taught. Pupils have access to a range of extra-curricular activities and trips. This enhances pupils' learning and widens their experiences across different subjects. However, the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) pupils receive is not effectively planned or taught to develop their personal and social skills consistently well. Not all pupils learn to respond positively or appropriately in a range of situations so that they are successfully prepared for adult life.
- Parents have mixed views about the school. Inspectors agree that the quality of education is variable. Relationships with some parents are not positive. Additionally, communication is not effective enough. Parents do not understand the reasons behind the decisions leaders make.
- There is now a stronger focus on ensuring that disadvantaged pupils make the progress required to attain as well as other pupils nationally. The trust oversees the effectiveness of the pupil premium spending. Leaders are now ensuring that the pupil premium is deployed more effectively to eradicate any gaps in the knowledge and skills of those pupils eligible. This focused approach has started to have a positive effect. Most disadvantaged pupils make strong progress from their different starting points.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), although relatively new to the role, ensures that funding is better spent. She has identified the right priorities for improvement and is beginning to address these systematically. She is ensuring more rigorous assessments of pupils' needs so that appropriate support is provided quickly. A new monitoring system is enabling leaders to check how well additional help is used to

make a difference to pupils' progress. Consequently, pupils with SEND achieve better than previously.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is promoted well. Through their lessons and assemblies, pupils develop a good understanding of the school's Christian ethos and a range of cultures and faiths seen in Britain today. This positive and inclusive approach prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders use the primary physical education (PE) and sport funding effectively. Pupils have been provided with opportunities to take part in a wide range of sports including netball, basketball and dodgeball. Pupils speak highly of, and enjoy, the inter-school sports competitions and after-school clubs they take part in. The use of sports coaches to provide specialist support has raised the profile of PE and promotes healthy lifestyles.

Governance of the school

- The academy council is committed to the success of the school but has not held leaders sufficiently to account over time. This is largely because members lack the information needed to be able to ask the right questions and assure themselves that leaders are taking effective action.
- There are several new members of the academy council. Collectively, they bring a wide set of professional skills to their role, and a good knowledge of the local community. Members receive training and support from the trust, which means they are developing the knowledge to evaluate better the evidence provided by school leaders. The minutes of recent academy council meetings show that its members are now providing more appropriate challenge and are beginning to hold leaders more stringently to account.
- The academy council has carried out its statutory duties, including in relation to safeguarding. The trust has ensured that additional funding, such as the pupil premium funding, is deployed with increasing effectiveness, for example to overcome barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The designated safeguarding leaders ensure that all training for staff is up to date and that procedures to keep vulnerable pupils from harm are firmly in place. Leaders and staff have a good understanding of local issues within the community and work well with external agencies so that they can support pupils and their families effectively.
- Leaders ensure that accurate records are kept and have a good oversight of vulnerable families. Staff are vigilant for pupils' safety and confident to refer any concerns promptly.
- Leaders and the academy council are rigorous when recruiting staff. Comprehensive checks are made to ensure that staff and volunteers are safe to work with pupils.
- Pupils clearly explained how they make sure that they keep themselves safe when they are using the internet.

- Most parents are confident in the school's commitment to securing their children's safety and well-being.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is too variable across the school. There are pockets of good practice but not all teachers plan activities that are tailored to pupils' starting points.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They ensure that pupils, including the most able, are regularly given tasks that challenge them and stretch their thinking. Where this is the case, pupils' progress is strongest. However, not all teachers share the same high expectations. In some lessons, teachers do not adjust the lesson according to how well pupils are progressing. This results in slow progress for those who already understand a concept. Where teachers do not address misconceptions, other pupils continue to make the same mistakes. Consequently, pupils do not make the progress they could over time.
- Leaders have introduced a range of approaches to support the rapid improvement of teaching in reading, writing and mathematics. Where teachers are adopting these, there has been an improvement on how well learning proceeds and this can be seen in some pupils' current work books. However, due to the variability in teaching, and the legacy of pupils' underperformance, particularly in Year 6, these changes have not been universally successful and so the effect on pupils' outcomes across the school remains limited.
- Where teaching is strongest, pupils' writing skills are being developed effectively both in English lessons and across other subjects. Leaders have introduced higher-quality texts which are having a beneficial effect on the quality of writing. Pupils also have more opportunities to develop their vocabulary and strengthen their knowledge of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Nevertheless, teachers do not consistently ensure that writing tasks are sufficiently ambitious.
- Teachers model mathematical vocabulary and focus on developing pupils' calculation skills. Following staff training, there is evidence of teachers giving more attention to developing pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills. These teaching approaches are not yet used effectively across the school.
- Younger children develop their phonics skills through active and interesting sessions. Most children use these skills effectively when reading books. Older pupils enjoy reading and are becoming more competent and confident readers.
- Teaching assistants throughout the school provide high-quality support for pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or with SEND. They ask well-considered questions, encouraging pupils to think about the skills they have previously learned to help them with their work. Teaching assistants are skilful at providing the right level of support and then stepping back to encourage pupils to be independent at just the right time. This promotes effective learning.
- Learning relationships are strong. Most pupils enjoy working together and are keen to learn. Classrooms and corridors are brightly decorated with interesting displays of pupils' work and helpful guidance for learning. These resources and examples of good work encourage pupils and show them what they can achieve.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are generally strong and nurturing. Pupils say they know who to talk to if they have a concern and are confident to do so.
- While most pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school a few pupils were less sure. In addition, some pupils shared concerns regarding how the school deals with bullying and the use of derogatory language. A small number of parents also voiced these concerns.
- Most pupils speak positively about the PSHE education they receive. Pupils are taught the importance of healthy eating and many are involved in sporting activities at school. The school council is active and leads fundraising for charities at school. Other pupils have opportunities to practise leadership skills and take on additional roles to support the smooth running of the school. Consequently, most pupils develop personal skills well; however, the PSHE curriculum provided by the school does not ensure that all pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, appreciate others and treat everyone with respect.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Some parents told inspectors that they feel the behaviour of pupils is not good at Great Barford. The evidence gathered by the inspectors does not support this view. During the inspection, inspectors found most pupils to be courteous, polite and friendly. They conduct themselves well, both in lessons and when moving around the building. They behave safely when playing outside. Most pupils are respectful to adults and help to keep the building clean and tidy.
- Pupils generally work well, with their partners and in small groups, and happily help each other. This good behaviour contributes well to the school's overall positive and purposeful atmosphere.
- Pupils come to school regularly. Their attendance is above the national average and has continued to improve. Leaders have worked closely with families to increase attendance in individual cases. This has led to an increase in the attendance of vulnerable pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' learning and progress vary across the school according to the quality of teaching in each class and year group. Expectations of what pupils can achieve, including the most able, have not been consistently high across the school.
- In 2018, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standards at the end of key

stage 1 were above the national average in reading and mathematics and broadly in line in writing. However, the proportions attaining greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics have been below the national average for the past two years.

- There are no published outcomes for the end of key stage 2. The school's assessment information and work in pupils' books indicate that most of the current pupils in Year 6 are making better progress than previously in reading, writing and mathematics. However, due to some historical weaknesses in the teaching of English and mathematics, some pupils have gaps in their learning and are not currently working at age-related standards in these subjects.
- Across the school, the most able pupils do not achieve well enough. Too many do not develop the deep understanding needed to achieve the higher standards.
- The quality of pupils' work in reading, writing and mathematics is beginning to improve as teachers' expectations rise and developments in teaching begin to take effect. Work in pupils' books and the school's current assessment information show that the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school is increasing.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the national phonics check at the end of Year 1 improved significantly in 2018 and was in line with the national average. This is because phonics is taught systematically, pupils' progress is now closely monitored and additional support is swiftly put in place for any pupils who are underachieving. Consequently, most pupils use their phonics skills well when they read books.
- Disadvantaged pupils are supported effectively through focused support and appropriate intervention programmes. As a result, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is improving and is now closer to the achievement of other pupils nationally.
- The school's assessment information and work in current books indicate that pupils with SEND are making strong progress from their starting points because of the high-quality support they receive.
- Pupils' work across the curriculum varies considerably because teachers' expectations are lower in some other subjects, for example history and geography. Pupils clearly enjoy a wide range of experiences, but their work does not always show the same commitment and standards as in English and mathematics.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enter the early years with knowledge and skills that are broadly typical for their age in most areas of learning. Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. Consequently, children are well prepared to make a strong start in Year 1.
- The early years leader is knowledgeable about how young children learn. Leaders have a good understanding of the strengths of the provision and are ambitious for its continued success. Through accurate assessment and careful observation, activities are often extended, or support provided. Intervention from adults at the time of need has resulted in good progress for those children requiring additional support.

- Strong teaching and effective modelling enable children to master basic reading and writing skills. Children use their phonics well when writing words and sentences independently and some children know when to use capital letters, finger spaces and full stops. For example, a group of children were observed eagerly making lists of the fruits and vegetables they wanted to grow in the outdoor gardening area.
- The curriculum takes into consideration children's interests and, as a result, they show enthusiasm and enjoyment in their learning. Children are eager to talk about their learning experiences. For example, some children in one of the Reception classes explained with great enthusiasm how they were following the words and pictures in a simple recipe book to make a cake. The children were excited but spoke clearly and with confidence about the steps they were taking.
- The learning environment has been carefully thought out and is stimulating for children. Both indoors and outside, children's independence is encouraged and children work well together.
- Safeguarding is effective in the early years. All welfare requirements are met in the Nursery and Reception classes. Parents have confidence that their children are well cared for and safe. Most parents are very supportive of the provision in the early years and there is evidence of a strengthening partnership here.

School details

Unique reference number	143770
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10084588

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	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	297
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Nick Papé
Headteacher	Sarah Evans
Telephone number	01234 870 342
Website	www.gbpa.org.uk
Email address	admin@gbpa.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school has undergone a period of significant change in the last two years. In June 2017, the school converted to an academy. The school is part of the Unity Church of England Multi Academy Trust (UMAT). It is currently the only school in the trust. The trust delegates aspects of governance to the academy council. The board of trustees is the accountable body.
- In September 2018, the school became Great Barford Church of England Primary School operating over two sites. This followed the extension of the former Great Barford Lower School to include Year 5 and Year 6. The primary school was established on the former local middle school site to accommodate the additional pupil numbers. The building and grounds were refurbished between July and November 2018. Great

Barford Church of England Primary School completed the full transfer to this site in November 2018.

- In September 2018, the school also became a Church of England school and is supported by the Diocese of St Albans.
- There has been a significant change in staff. Currently, 24 of the 58 staff have joined the school since September 2018.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the government's pupil premium funding is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive SEND support is in line with the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in every class. Several of the observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher or assistant headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of pupils' workbooks throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and the assistant headteacher, both of whom hold a designated safeguarding leader role. Inspectors met with some middle leaders, the SENCo, the early years leader, the PE leader, the newly qualified teacher, the family support adviser, the school business manager and the attendance officer. The lead inspector met with the chair of the academy council, some of the trustees from UMAT and a representative from the local authority to discuss their work with the school.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally in class and around the school at break and lunchtimes to seek their views about the school. One inspector attended a whole-school assembly.
- Inspectors met with two groups of pupils more formally to discuss many aspects of school life.
- Inspectors heard some pupils in Year 1, Year 2 and Year 6 read. Inspectors talked to pupils about their reading habits and looked at their reading records.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's website and a range of school documents including: assessment information; the school's own evaluation; improvement plans; minutes from the academy council meetings and records about behaviour, safeguarding children and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the emails and letters received from parents. Inspectors also spoke with some parents before school at the beginning of the day and during the inspection.
- Inspectors considered the 138 responses made by parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the responses from the school's own recent parent survey.

Inspection team

Fiona Webb, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop	Her Majesty's Inspector
Helen Jones	Ofsted Inspector
Brenda Watson	Ofsted Inspector

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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.

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