



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports**

**Bedford Modern School**

**February 2022**

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## School's Details

<b>School</b>	Bedford Modern School			
<b>DfE number</b>	822/6011			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	204817			
<b>Address</b>	Bedford Modern School Manton Lane Bedford Bedfordshire MK41 7NT			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01234 332500			
<b>Email address</b>	head@bedmod.co.uk			
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Alex Tate			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Shirley Jackson			
<b>Age range</b>	7 to 18			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	1282			
	<b>Juniors</b>	250	<b>Seniors</b>	728
	<b>Sixth Form</b>	304		
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1 to 4 February 2022			

## 1. Background Information

### About the school

- 1.1 Bedford Modern School is an independent co-educational day school. It is one of four schools within the Harpur Trust, the origins of which date back to 1556. The Trust has strategic responsibility for the school whilst the operational governance is delegated to the Bedford Modern School Committee. The junior and senior schools occupy buildings on the same site and share many facilities.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the school has undertaken a refurbishment of classrooms, common room spaces and the catering facilities, as well as having a new artificial turf sports pitch laid and invested heavily in improving IT infrastructure and capability.
- 1.3 During the period March to August 2020, the school remained open for children of key workers and vulnerable pupils. The Junior School phased the return of pupils from 01.06.20 starting with Year 6 and building up so that 80% were back in school for the last two weeks of the Summer Term.
- 1.4 During this period of closure, the school provided remote learning materials for all pupils and access to online lessons.
- 1.5 In the interests of infection control during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, inspection evidence was gathered partly remotely and partly on site to reduce contact within the school setting.
- 1.6 In line with the direction given by the Department for Education (DfE) at the time, no evaluation has been made of the nature or effectiveness of any provision made during the period March to August 2020, including its impact on pupils' learning, achievement or personal development. Any concerns relating to pupils' welfare during this period which directly relate to measures implemented by the school have been considered.
- 1.7 During the lockdown period of January to March 2021, all pupils other than vulnerable pupils or the children of key workers received remote learning provision at home.
- 1.8 In 2020 and 2021, public examinations were not held. For pupils who would have been expected to take these examinations, centre-assessed grades in 2020, and teacher-assessed grades in 2021, were awarded.

### What the school seeks to do

- 1.9 The school aims to inspire excellence and to inspire, engage, encourage, and cultivate pupils. It seeks to promote values of kindness, resilience, independence, respect, responsibility, integrity and ambition.

### About the pupils

- 1.10 Most pupils come from families with range of professional and business backgrounds and live within a 20-mile radius of the school. The school's own assessment data indicate that the ability of pupils on entry to the school is above average compared to those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 203 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including social, emotional, and mental health needs, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, and visual impairment. Three pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 42 pupils, none of whom require additional support for their English. The school identifies just over one in ten pupils as being more able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them, including for pupils who have special talents in performing arts and sport.

## 2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

### Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

**This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards.** The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#).

**COVID-19: Inspection judgements do not cover the period March to August 2020 inclusive.**

## Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

### **PART 1 – Quality of education provided**

- 2.2 In the junior school, the school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 At GCSE in the years 2020 to 2021, performance has confirmed that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.4 In the sixth form, A-level results in the years 2020 to 2021 have confirmed that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.5 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.6 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.7 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

### **PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

- 2.8 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.9 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

### **PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 2.10 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.11 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

### **PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors**

- 2.12 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.13 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

## **PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools**

2.14 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

**2.15 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.**

## **PART 6 – Provision of information**

2.16 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

**2.17 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.**

## **PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled**

2.18 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

**2.19 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.**

## **PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

2.20 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

**2.21 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.**

### 3. Educational Quality Inspection

#### Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

**The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.**

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

#### Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils achieve success in a wide range of academic activities.
- Pupils enjoy and achieve well in areas beyond the classroom, particularly in drama, music and sport.
- Pupils demonstrate high levels of initiative, communication and collaborative skills.
- Pupils employ their information and communication technology (ICT) skills effectively to support their learning.
- Pupils do not always use higher-order thinking skills sufficiently well.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils form positive relationships with each other and staff and they develop effective leadership skills.
- Pupils feel safe and understand what constitutes a healthy lifestyle.
- Pupils support the school's aims and ethos by displaying a clear commitment to serving the wider community.
- Pupils develop high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem which enable them to become effective decision-makers.
- Pupils do not always fully appreciate the diversity of others.

#### Recommendations

3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider:

- Enabling pupils to improve their higher-order thinking skills by ensuring that work is consistently set at a sufficiently challenging level.
- Enabling pupils to appreciate fully the importance of the diversity.

#### The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

3.5 In the junior school, pupils make strong progress from their starting points. In both the senior school and sixth form, pupils of all abilities make good progress across the range of subjects. Pupils with SEND



and EAL make consistently rapid progress, with many overcoming significant barriers to learning and exceeding expectations. At GCSE, in the three years from 2017 to 2019, the majority of pupils achieved the highest three grades. One in five of the results of those who were centre-assessed and teacher-assessed were graded at the very highest level. For the same period at A level, almost half of all pupils achieved an A\* or A grade. The centre-assessed and teacher-assessed grades show improvement on this already strong base, with almost two thirds of results being at one of the top grades, and almost a third at A\* grade. Pupils are keen to access the enrichment programme in the sixth form. This enables them to take an Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), with most achieving an A\* or A grade. Almost all pupils achieve places at the most selective universities in a range of disciplines, including those with the highest entry criteria. Across the school, pupils with SEND and EAL are equally successful in their attainment and achievement. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the vast majority of parents agreed that their children's individual educational needs are met effectively. Pupils who spoke to inspectors value the support they are given for any specific educational difficulty.

- 3.6 Pupils enjoy success in academic and other achievements. Many pupils achieve notably well, both within and beyond the school, in creative arts, sport and activities such as the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DoE). Pupils have represented the school at national levels in athletics, endurance riding, rowing, rugby and water polo, displaying high standards in these pursuits. In addition, pupils have competed with success in hockey, netball, table tennis and tennis at regional levels and in golf at county level. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, almost all parents agreed that the school provides a suitable range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils take great delight in participating in theatre productions and concerts. These experiences help them to develop high levels of self-confidence and self-control, particularly when performing in public. In 2020–2021, all candidates achieved a distinction or merit in public examinations for Musical Theatre. Pupils gain valuable experience and achieve well performing in choirs, orchestras, bands and musical ensembles. In recent public examinations in music, the large majority of candidates achieved merit or distinction levels. In 2021, some pupils were awarded a prestigious Arkwright Scholarship award for engineering.
- 3.7 Pupils display mature levels of knowledge and understanding across the curriculum. They achieve well because much of the teaching is ambitious, challenging, stimulating and well matched to pupils' needs. In a music lesson, sixth-form pupils demonstrated high levels of specialist knowledge of melody and harmony when analysing *One Day More*, from the musical *Les Misérables*. Through perceptive and penetrating scrutiny and analysis of the musical score, pupils were able to discover how the composer heightened the emotion in the piece. Older pupils in the junior school were able to identify the properties of quadrilaterals in a mathematics lesson. In an English lesson, younger pupils made strong progress in their understanding and use of parts of verbs because activities challenged their thinking. Sometimes, pupils miss opportunities to improve their higher-order thinking skills when teaching is insufficiently challenging.
- 3.8 Pupils from the junior school through to the sixth form display very well-developed communication and listening skills. Most speak with confidence and enthusiasm and enjoy expressing themselves orally. As pupils mature, they begin to grasp the difference between formal and informal styles of speaking and writing. In a sixth-form English lesson, the poem *To His Mistress Going to Bed* by John Donne was read aloud with sensitivity, fluency and expression and showed a mature appreciation for style. Following this, pupils confidently discussed the structure, meaning and literary techniques used within the poem. Pupils across the school listen respectfully to their teachers and to each other. In the junior school, pupils relish the opportunity to share their views with maturity and insight for their age and draw upon a wide-ranging vocabulary. They take delight in participating in class discussion and offer responses, without worrying about the possibility of failure.
- 3.9 Pupils employ their information and communication technology skills effectively to support their learning. For example, pupils in the junior school learned for the first time the practical steps to receive

and send an email. Pupils' engagement was high in this lesson because they could see how useful this skill is in real life. In a practical chemistry lesson, older senior school pupils used technology with great efficiency to ensure that a classmate working remotely was able to follow the progress of an investigation into the reactivity of different metals with the rest of the class. Pupils' skill in using ICT has enabled them to maintain progress across the curriculum during national lockdown.

- 3.10 Pupils across the school develop good numeracy skills. For example, in an A-Level computing lesson, sixth-form pupils were able to use a complicated formula to calculate a computer's unique security code address using it to identify a network user on the internet. Junior school pupils show enthusiasm for, and competence in, number and calculation and enjoy opportunities to apply their skills across other subjects. For example, they were able to measure and work out the area of spaces outdoors.
- 3.11 Pupils demonstrate effective study skills because of their ability to work collegiately and to be responsible for their own learning. Supported by the positive classroom ethos, pupils develop the confidence and resilience to tackle difficult problems. They value the opportunities to collaborate and to take the initiative in their learning. As they progress through the school, pupils can access resources, specially designed by the staff, that support them in being able to organise their own learning and to study more effectively. In the best lessons in the junior school, pupils seize every occasion to debate and analyse new and prior learning concepts. The 'Daily Think' challenge question on the board offers opportunities to embrace new styles of reasoning and thinking. For instance, in a challenging English lesson, Year 6 pupils were able to effectively evaluate biased language in a newspaper article. In other lessons across the school, however, pupils showed limited initiative and were unduly directed by the teaching. Pupils' potential to develop their higher-order thinking skills is sometimes impeded by teachers' questioning which is not always broad enough in scope.
- 3.12 Pupils' positive attitudes to learning can be seen in classrooms and beyond. In a modern foreign languages lesson, junior school pupils became increasingly confident in translating a challenging passage from Spanish into English. Here they demonstrated initiative and resilience to persevere with the task, even when they made small slips. Pupils' positivism and motivation is facilitated well by staff who promote warm and collaborative working relationships with them. Pupils successfully produce the annual *Eaglet* magazine, guided by staff, in which all articles are written by pupils. In discussion with inspectors, pupils spoke positively about the help they had received from staff to promote their personal development, which they said was key to achieving academic success.

### **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils demonstrate high levels of self-understanding, taking into account their ages and abilities. This is because they respond positively in discussions about their feelings and their future aspirations. Most pupils demonstrate excellent self-knowledge, competently identifying personal strengths and areas for improvement. They make well-considered judgments, underpinned by strong self-confidence. For example, junior school pupils spoke of how the *Emotion Wheels* in their classrooms and planners successfully helped them to express their inner feelings safely. As pupils move through the school, their confidence and self-understanding increase, nurtured by excellent welfare and pastoral support. They feel ready and well prepared for the next stage of their lives. Pupils value the support given to them by staff and work hard to appreciate and fulfil the school's values of 'kindness, resilience, independence, respect, responsibility, integrity and ambition.'
- 3.15 Pupils make wise and sensible decisions. They understand that key choices made in school will affect their future lives. For example, in a PSHE lesson, senior school pupils demonstrated an excellent understanding of how to categorise and respond to potentially harmful sexual behaviours in the workplace. They maintained strong focus and engagement in their discussion which followed a thought-provoking video clip on sexual harassment. As a result, pupils learned that they needed to adapt their interpretation of, and attitude to, harassment. They develop a reflective approach towards

their studies and successfully manage their commitments, understanding the need for a balanced lifestyle in which academic and extra-curricular activities complement each other. Older junior school pupils understand that decisions they make about friendships will be important for their futures. They adjust their behaviour accordingly because they understand the value of friendship for both their own and others' mental health and well-being.

- 3.16 Pupils demonstrate a keen sense of social development, collaboration and contribution to others and the community. Across the school, caring for others is part of the ethos. Pupils work effectively with others in solving problems to achieve shared goals. For example, older pupils play a significant role in supporting the staff in the supervision of younger children in common areas during and after school. Pupils take great pride in contributing to society by raising money for several charities based in the UK and overseas. In their discussion with inspectors, pupils in the junior school stated that the house system encouraged a greater sense of belonging, and provided many opportunities to work with and learn from older pupils. Across the school pupils enjoy taking on leadership roles such as house captains and anti-bullying ambassadors. This enables them to make a positive contribution to the wider life of the school.
- 3.17 Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe online. They know not to give out personal details and to tell a trusted adult if they receive communication from someone they do not know or unkind or bullying messages. This was confirmed in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire in which almost all pupils stated that they know how to stay safe online. Pupils are developing mature awareness of issues which arise during adolescence, including consent, social boundaries and keeping safe in personal relationships. Pupils have a good awareness of how to support their mental health, for instance readily using the school's own well-being centre to seek advice. They understand that problems in mental health can affect anyone at any time in their lives. They also know that, as part of leading a healthy lifestyle, it is important to get enough sleep, eat a balanced diet and take regular exercise.
- 3.18 Throughout the school community, pupils demonstrate a good sense of spiritual awareness. They express their appreciation of non-material aspects of life through music, art, dance, and drama. For example, sixth-form pupils were notably moved when they listened to a piece of music by J S Bach performed by one of their peers. In a religious studies lesson, sixth form pupils reflected on the Five Pillars of Islam. Here they displayed a good understanding of and sensitivity to non-material aspects of life, by reflecting on and appreciating their own understanding and that of others. Junior school pupils have regular quiet times where they can reflect upon all aspects of their lives and their progress in school.
- 3.19 Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong. They demonstrate a keen sense of social development and community. They are polite and typically listen to adults and one another respectfully. For example, in a personal, social and health education (PSHE) lesson on diversity, prejudice and discrimination, younger senior pupils were able to recall confidently details about the nine characteristics of individuals that are protected in law. Some pupils were able to talk cogently about the complexity of prejudice and discrimination. Most pupils are well behaved and understand the school's rules and sanctions. However, in the pre-inspection questionnaires, a small minority of pupils do not believe that pupils are always kind and respectful towards each other. This view was also echoed by some of the many pupils interviewed by inspectors. Scrutiny of behaviour records shows that incidents of behaviour are generally dealt with in a timely and effective manner, and that overall, incidents are falling. Leaders have already identified the consistent application of sanctions across the school as an area for staff training.
- 3.20 Pupils learn about other cultures and the diversity of societies in subjects across the curriculum as well as from the different cultures represented among the school population. For example, in a GCSE art lesson, senior school pupils increased their knowledge about Italian Renaissance art by closely examining the design style of a clay pot from the period. Other senior pupils participated successfully in a thought-provoking and challenging piece of drama, *Wake Up Britain*, which focused on aspects of

identity and gender issues. Younger pupils develop a broad awareness of different cultures and religious customs, for example, by learning about the Spanish festival of *La Tomatina* and the Jewish Passover. The senior pupils who are active in the LGBTQ+ societies are highly articulate and influential role models for the school. They demonstrated a deep understanding of the key themes and debates regarding diversity and cultural understanding in their discussion of related issues in school life. Most pupils are respectful of diversity within the community and are prepared to have open discussions about religion, ethnicity, gender, and disability. In the pupil pre-inspection questionnaires, a small minority of pupils felt that they are not always treated equally in the school. This view was reflected during some of the interviews with inspectors, where pupils did not always demonstrate a wide enough appreciation, knowledge and understanding of diversity.

## 4. Inspection Evidence

4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff, the chair of governors and attended form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mr David Scott	Reporting inspector
Mrs Loraine Cavanagh	Deputy reporting inspector
Dr Mark Golder	Compliance team inspector (Senior teacher, GSA and HMC school)
Dr Maria Bush	Team inspector (Former deputy head, GSA school)
Mr Jeremy Hallows	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Mr Stephen Hardy	Team inspector (Assistant head, HMC school)
Mrs Pamela Hutley	Team inspector (Former headteacher, ISA school)
Mr Jason Lewis	Team inspector (Former assistant head, HMC school)
Mrs Sarah Morris	Team inspector (Headteacher, ISA and IAPS school)