

Brentwood School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106391
Local Authority	Trafford
Inspection number	355942
Inspection dates	25–26 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Jim Alexander

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	94
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	26
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Kevin Moore
Headteacher	Mrs Hilary Moon
Date of previous school inspection	17 October 2007
School address	Brentwood Avenue Timperley, Altrincham Cheshire WA14 1SR
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons taught by 11 teachers and support staff. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, teaching staff, medical staff and students. They observed the school's work and looked at assessment records, reports to the governing body, development plans and attendance records. The 65 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were also analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The rigour with which the school tracks the progress of all students.
- How teachers use what they know about students to boost their learning.
- How well the transition arrangements for the sixth form students supports their specific needs. ÷÷÷
- The impact of leaders and managers, at all levels, on sustaining improvement in students' outcomes.

Information about the school

Brentwood School provides for students with severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, as well as those with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). A small minority of students also have regressive and life-threatening conditions. All students have a statement of special educational needs. The vast majority are transported to and from school, while very few are brought by their families. An above average number of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and an above average proportion are from other ethnic groups; a small number of whom do not speak English as their first language. The school also has a small proportion of students who are looked after by the local authority. The school has recently appointed an assistant headteacher to lead post-16 provision, a specialist ASD teacher and two further members of the teaching staff.

The school has gained a number of awards including Enhanced Healthy School status, Investors in People, Sportsmark, Eco Bronze award, Trafford Bronze Race Equality and the International School's Award. In 2009, the school also achieved Specialist School Status in communication and interaction.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Brentwood is an outstanding school. It combines the highest standards of care with excellence in learning. The school has gone from strength to strength since the time of the previous inspection because of the energetic and determined leadership of the head and deputy headteacher, excellently supported by highly skilled and dedicated staff. The school reviews its work rigorously and is constantly looking for ways to improve. The rate of progress for the more able student, for example, has been significantly improved since the time of the previous inspection. This ensures all groups make the same outstanding progress from their starting points to reach and often exceed the challenging targets set for them. This is just one example of many that demonstrates the school's excellent capacity for sustained improvement.

Teaching is exemplary because it is always challenging and fun, ensuring that excellent progress is made in lessons and therapy sessions. Very good use is made of technology to support both communication and interaction with adults and peers. An imaginative, rich curriculum is carefully designed to follow students' enthusiasm and extend their knowledge of themselves and the world around them. The many positive enrichment activities make a significant contribution to students' enjoyment of school, their personal and social development; successfully broadening their horizons.

Students' behaviour, their sense of safety and their contribution to creating a happy and secure community are all outstanding. Students greatly benefit for the kind and caring example set by adults, in whom they have complete trust because 'they're never cross and always, always very kind'. Students are encouraged to be healthy, enjoy healthy meals and take advantage of the many extra-curricular activities. Their excellent attendance is testimony to their great enjoyment of school.

The sixth form is outstanding and transition arrangements strong. The recently appointed assistant headteacher, together with staff, has designed improvements to the curriculum to further enhance independent skills, work related learning and functional skills. This, building on the already strong provision, is providing more opportunities for external accreditation for students' hard work. This demonstrates the department's relentless drive for improvement. These recent developments will now need to be carefully monitored to ensure the successful influence on students' progress continues. Reflective and ambitious leadership, coupled with excellent provision, ensures the outcomes for these students are also outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Monitor carefully the developments to the sixth form curriculum to ensure that the successful impact on students' progress continues.

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Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Attainment on entry and standards reached by students are restricted by their abilities and it is inappropriate to compare these to national expectations for students of a similar age. Nevertheless, the data held by the school on students' progress is well assured through external moderation and shows all groups make outstanding gains in their learning and development. Students' attitudes to learning and concentration in their lessons, relative to their learning difficulties, are a significant factor in the excellent progress they make. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, students wholeheartedly enjoyed a dance warm-up to a history lesson on Ancient Egypt. The teacher then used a range of materials, papyrus for example, to enrich students' sensory awareness. Students' understanding was then taken further by a range of questions skilfully pitched at the right level for each student. Even when there are occasional distractions students remain on task and are well assisted by support staff. Experienced medical staff and therapists ensure that best use is made of every opportunity. Students who have more profound special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported to work equally well alongside their friends. They have individual programmes of support that are precisely tailored to their specific need and exceptionally well taught so that they are able to make the same progress as others in the school. Relationships between students and staff are a strength of the school and explain their enjoyment of learning. Students are exceptionally courteous and many have a role of responsibility that contributes to the smooth running of the school. Misbehaviour is rare and students are keen to quickly make amends if they feel they have let themselves down. They help to support a number of local and national charities and are proud to welcome visitors during open days. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

How effective is the provision?

One of the great strengths in teaching is the knowledge staff have of students as individuals. They use their considerable expertise to provide activities and resources that closely match the needs of every student. All lessons are built on the foundations of both excellent relationships and frequent use of praise to reinforce students' learning and raise belief in their own abilities. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used frequently to enliven lessons and support learning. In the best lessons, teaching assistants are deployed effectively and plans clearly identify their role so not a moment of time is wasted and learning moves at a brisk pace. Pupils are also given responsibility for their own learning and respond to these high expectations very well. On very rare occasions, teachers do not always deploy assistants as quickly as they might and consequently students are not helped to make the best use of every moment.

The curriculum is vibrant and stimulating. At its core is the focus on providing interest, fun and suitably challenging learning and development for all students. It is enriched very well by themed weeks, visits, cultural and artistic work. Performing arts, the school choir and physical education are notable strengths of the school. Partnerships are effective and every opportunity is taken to provide lively experiences for students. An example of this is the drum club, organised and run by the school caretaker who is an accomplished

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musician. Leaders appreciated how much students were enjoying attending drum club and quickly wove anger management therapy into the sessions. This has greatly benefited students to manage their own behaviour very well during other lessons. The impact of the schools' specialist status threads through the curriculum to enhance students' communication skills using a range of technologies, providing access for all.

Care, guidance and support are a notable strength in this amazing school. High quality input from therapists, the school medical team and an extensive range of outside agencies ensures students' physical, emotional and medical needs are fully met with dignity and respect. Induction and transition arrangements that involve parents, carers and multi-agencies ensure smooth transition of learning is well planned. The school's work to ensure students' needs are supported by external professional agencies is exemplary.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school is expertly led by the headteacher and deputy headteacher who encourage and value staff contributions. Leaders are ambitious for the students in their school and relentless in their desire for improvement. This drive for excellence is shared by all staff as they see the students benefit as a direct result of their commitment. A range of data is used exceptionally well to check how well the school is doing and to determine the next steps that are required. Self-evaluation is robust and accurate. The experienced governing body is extremely effective and very well organised. It gives exceptional support to ensure resources are very well used to get the best for students. They robustly hold the school to account and encouraging its successful development. Monitoring, evaluation and regular reviews ensure the school's continual improvement. Safeguarding arrangements permeate all aspects of school and this is why students demonstrate such excellent understanding of how to keep safe.

The quality of teaching has improved since the time of the last inspection due the rigorous monitoring by senior leaders, the desire staff have to improve outcomes for students, and some very successful appointments. All staff are vigilant to treat students fairly and systems to ensure equal opportunities for all are secure. The school acts with rigor, using information from extensive research and analysis, to promote religious, ethnic and social-economic awareness very well. The impact of the students' understanding of community cohesion is appreciated within the school, locally and wider afield. Parents and carers have very positive views of the school. The overwhelming majority share the view that 'Brentwood School is on-the-ball with all aspects of my child's needs and capabilities'.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

Students' progress is outstanding. They benefit from excellent teaching, extremely well-deployed, experienced teaching assistants and effective use of technology to support all aspects of learning and physical development. Very positive relationships and good humour are hallmarks of time spent in the sixth form. A notable strength in the department is the development of students' independent skills. In a yoga lesson, for example, one student was given the responsibility to lead four of their peers in various stretches and relaxation techniques. This provided valuable opportunity for adults to give additional support to those with more profound and multiple difficulties. Particularly, students who are vulnerable due to their circumstances or those who have regressive conditions are exceptionally well cared for. A flexible approach is adopted and staff work closely with school-based health professionals and outside agencies to ensure attendance is the best it can be.

Many students gain entry level qualifications and other nationally recognised awards. External work placements are arranged, appropriate to students' abilities and are greatly enjoyed. Life and functional skills are at the forefront of time spent at sixth form and students benefit from excellent facilities.

The recently appointed assistant headteacher, who has leadership responsibility for the post-16 provision, has a clear vision of how to improve further the opportunities for students. The school is benefiting from the experience brought to this post. A residential trip, for example, has been introduced. Staff have also redesigned the curriculum to increase the opportunity for external accreditation for students' hard work. This has been meticulously planned and implemented. The benefit on students' outcomes is already evident. Leaders will now need to monitor carefully this development to ensure it stays on track and has the desired results.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who completed the questionnaire or who spoke to an inspector, were very pleased with the school and what it offers. Those who made specific comments spoke of their children being very happy in school. A very small minority of parents and carers that raised concern did so in relation to the school's ability to meet their child's specific need. Inspectors found students' needs to be exceptionally well met and the care, guidance and support offered to students to be outstanding.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Brentwood School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 65 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 94 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	68	18	28	1	2	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	37	57	26	40	0	0	2	3
My school informs me about my child's progress	33	51	27	42	2	3	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	58	20	31	3	5	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	39	60	21	32	3	5	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	54	23	35	3	5	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	37	57	21	32	3	5	1	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	37	57	21	32	1	2	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	58	20	31	4	6	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	57	24	37	0	0	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	51	25	38	3	5	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	37	57	22	34	3	5	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	42	65	18	28	1	2	1	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



27 January 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Brentwood School, Altrincham, WA14 1SR

Thank you for the very warm welcome when we inspected your school recently. I would like to let you know our views of your school.

Brentwood is an outstanding school. It is exceptionally well led and the staff work very well to provide such interesting and helpful lessons. The teaching is excellent and you make brilliant progress in your time at school. You are obviously enjoying all the school has to offer and you use ICT very well to support your learning. The very wide range of extra-curricular activities also helps you become confident and enthusiastic learners. Your behaviour is wonderful and you are polite and courteous to one another. You are exceptionally good ambassadors for your school. You told us you enjoying coming to school and that explains why your attendance is so high.

In the sixth form, students also make excellent progress and enjoy the many activities on offer. I particularly enjoyed the excellent yoga and movement lesson and was impressed with how you actually led sessions yourselves. The drumming was also excellent! I know staff in the sixth form have designed and implemented some changes to your lessons and what you learn. This is excellent and it is already paying off. I have asked that leaders keep a watchful eye on these developments to ensure they remain as helpful as they can be.

Thank you for completing the student questionnaires and taking time to talk to us.

Your contribution to the inspection was extremely helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Jim Alexander

Lead Inspector

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