

The Bromfords School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115323
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	357732
Inspection dates	17–18 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Mark Sims HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
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	1203
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	119
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony King
Headteacher	Marian Spinks
Date of previous school inspection	14 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 43 lessons taught by 41 teachers. Inspectors also held meetings with the headteacher, staff, governors, students and a representative of the local authority. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including safeguarding documents, improvement plans, progress reports, minutes of governing body meetings and records of students' progress. Inspectors analysed questionnaires from 160 parents and carers and took account of staff and pupil questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- How good is the achievement of middle attaining students and students in the sixth form?
- How effective is the provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities?
- How well do teachers use assessment in lessons to support students' learning?
- How effective are leaders and managers at all levels in monitoring provision and evaluating outcomes for learners?
- What is the impact of equalities policies to secure an inclusive school?

Information about the school

The Bromfords school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It is situated on the outskirts of Wickford. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average, as is the percentage of students who speak English as an additional language. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average, but the proportion with a statement is average. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The school has specialist status in technology.

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?**3****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****2**

Main findings

The Bromfords school is rapidly improving and provides a satisfactory standard of education. Following the last inspection report and monitoring visit GCSE examination results continued to fall but under the inspirational leadership of the new headteacher and senior leaders there has been a dramatic improvement in the most recent examination results. All groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and middle attaining students, have benefited from the improved outcomes so that achievement gaps have narrowed, although lower attaining boys remain a priority for the school.

All staff and leaders have captured the Headteacher and senior leaders' vision to such an extent that in a survey every member of staff who responded said they were proud to be a member of the school. While recent and current attainment is above average there has been a legacy of underachievement over the previous two years and so consequently attainment is satisfactory overall. This rapid turnaround has been achieved quickly, not by significantly improving the quality of teaching which remains satisfactory, but by a series of focused and highly effective interventions directed by senior leaders which has led to care, guidance and support being judged as good. Senior leaders have enhanced their role in monitoring the outcomes for students using data more efficiently but, while developing, this is not yet consistent enough at middle leader level. Students have risen to the challenge by their good behaviour and positive attitude to learning and all of these factors contributed significantly to a higher proportion than nationally achieving five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics in 2010. Students in the current Year 11 are already on course to emulate this achievement.

Most students say they feel safe and enjoy coming to school. Attendance levels have continued to rise and exclusions have fallen. Students are looked after well, for example through the Year 7 nurture group. Older students, particularly those in the sixth form, mentor younger students well. Assembly time is used well to enhance students' spiritual development, although the effectiveness of tutor time is mixed. Students' knowledge of cultural diversity is less well developed.

The curriculum is satisfactory and a wider range of courses tailored to different needs and interest is developing. The focus on intervention strategies has brought a rapid rise in achievement but, as yet, the key features of these are not incorporated in the curriculum in order to render such external support unnecessary. The specialist status in technology has led to high attainment in chemistry, physics and biology where the quality of teaching is high, but less so in technology itself where there has been staffing disruption.

In the sixth form there have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning as a result of leaders' and middle leaders' drive on monitoring provision. Overall

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effectiveness is satisfactory in line with outcomes for students, but as with the school as a whole, the leadership and management are good.

The headteacher and senior leaders' accurate self-evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development highlights the fact that there is much still to do. Having achieved the first key priority to raise standards in English and mathematics in a very short timescale, her next priority is to improve the quality of teaching. While an improving proportion of teaching is at least good there is a lack of consistency in how successfully teachers plan sufficient challenge for all groups of learners and give students responsibility for their learning. Written guidance on how students can improve their work is limited. Provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is variable in quality as not all teachers plan sufficiently for the full range of needs in their classes.

While the headteacher and senior leaders have set a clear vision and direction for the school, not all middle leaders have fully developed their role to monitor and evaluate the provision and outcomes in their subjects or areas of responsibility. However, there is strong capacity within the senior leadership team which is strengthening middle leaders' roles through, for example, paired observations of teaching. Equalities policies are now having an impact through the school's more rigorous monitoring of how well different groups do to ensure that achievement gaps are narrowed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring teachers consistently
 - plan for suitably challenging activities for all groups of learners
 - enable students to take a greater responsibility for their learning
 - evaluate the outcomes of lessons to plan more effectively the next steps in students' learning
 - use written feedback more effectively to let students know how well they are doing and how they could improve their work.
- Develop the quality of middle leadership by ensuring that when leaders monitor lessons they
 - evaluate the impact of lessons on the learning and attainment of students
 - check rigorously students' work to ensure marking is effective
 - share examples of identified good teaching more widely with their subject teams.
- Ensure that the features of successful intervention strategies for students are incorporated into the curriculum so that it is more responsive to the needs of individuals and different groups of learners.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

In all the most recent measures of GCSE results, standards of attainment are average. Students join the school at the start of Key Stage 3 having achieved levels in English,

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mathematics and science that are broadly average. The quality of students' learning in lessons is inconsistent but older students in Key Stage 4 make more rapid progress as a result of targeted intervention and effective additional support. This enabled 60% of students to gain five good grades in GCSE including English and mathematics, a significant increase over the previous two years and above the national average. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers. Learning in lessons is at its best when students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, evaluate their own performance and assess each others' work. For example in French students have a good knowledge of grade and level descriptors which gives them a clearer understanding of how they can improve. Elsewhere opportunities are more limited where lessons are directed too much by the teacher and do not engage students sufficiently in their learning. However, because of their positive attitude even in lessons that are less challenging, students often stay focused on their work.

The school provides an environment in which students feel safe. Students enjoy coming to school and their levels of attendance are good and rising. In most lessons the good behaviour of students enables them to learn well when teaching is at its best. Students are well informed in order to develop and maintain healthy lifestyles. Students enthusiastically contribute to charitable events and assemblies and take on roles of responsibility within the school. Overall students have achieved a satisfactory standard in basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). They are prepared well for their next steps moving from Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 5 or training and employment through a foundational curriculum programme. Their moral development is strong through, for example, their work in human rights in Year 7, but their knowledge of cultural diversity is more limited.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers' subject knowledge is good and in the best lessons teachers are able to engage students' interest and creativity through the innovative use of ICT. Additional staff are deployed well to support students in their learning. Students are keen to learn, even in less stimulating lessons where the same task for all does not challenge them sufficiently. Planning is based on students' prior learning and assessment is used most effectively when students listen to their peers' responses and evaluate them. Some students have a detailed knowledge of their targets and how they could improve further to reach them. However, this knowledge is not consistent and written marking does not give students a clear enough indication of how they could improve.

The curriculum is matched to some of the individual needs of students, for example through a Year 8 focus project. The school caters well for its students at risk of becoming vulnerable through a well established nurture group which provides a supportive environment. The Year 7 innovations project is a creative initiative which inspires students to learn. The school has not yet sufficiently evaluated the impact of such projects on achievement. There is a high take-up of enrichment activities within the school and through its role as an extended school. Take-up of activities by different groups is not sufficiently monitored, however. As yet the features of the highly successful intervention strategies have not been fully integrated into subject lessons in order to reduce the need for additional intervention and meet the needs of all groups of learners.

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Students are appreciative of the support which is available to them including the learning intervention programme. The school's new pastoral management system has freed up learning managers to focus on achievement. The pastoral centre is a strength of the school which acts as a hub for potentially vulnerable students. Transition arrangements between all key stages are effective. Primary schools are fully involved in the move from Key Stage 2 to 3. The school is at the early stage of reviewing and developing its provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities to ensure that teaching consistently plans for their needs and leads to improved outcomes for them. There are outstanding examples of where the school has responded to students' individual needs and made adaptations accordingly but this is not consistent to ensure all such needs are met.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders have successfully communicated their ambition to meet challenging targets for their students and raise achievement. Outcomes based on GCSE results and current levels of attainment in Year 11 indicate that improvements have been rapid and are improving further. The key drivers for improvement have been the leadership of the headteacher and senior leaders and well focused and targeted support. All staff have captured this ambition although the impact on improvement has not been as great with middle leaders, where there remain some inconsistencies in how well they monitor teaching and learning. This is developing as they work alongside experienced and highly effective senior leaders.

The governing body has undergone many changes including a new chair and several new members. They have an enhanced role in holding the school to account more robustly and know what areas still need to be developed further. But it is too soon to see the impact of this. The school is developing and strengthening its links with parents through, for example, the parent forum but, again, this is at an early stage of development. The school's equalities policies are having an impact particularly in narrowing the gap in achievement between different groups, but monitoring is not as well established in other areas such as in assessing the uptake of extra-curricular activities.

The school understands its local context well and has taken appropriate action to promote community cohesion but has yet to fully evaluate its impact. Overall the school gives satisfactory value for money. Policies and procedures for safeguarding are clear. Leaders are managers are clearly focused on their responsibilities and there have been recent significant improvements to security of the site. The school's subject specialism has had

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significant impact in raising attainment in the three sciences at GCSE but less so in technology due to staffing difficulties.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Sixth form students make a significant contribution to decision making through the school council and 'student voice', and to younger students' well-being, acting as mentors. There is a high retention rate for courses. A wide range of courses is offered which allows students who have not achieved sufficient C grades at GCSE to participate through one of three curriculum pathways. The curriculum also provides good enterprise activities which allow sixth formers to set up their own businesses. The good leadership has led to good teaching in a very short space of time and consequently recent A and AS level results have improved significantly and are satisfactory overall. There are no significant variations in outcomes for different groups of students.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account: Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

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Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of the parents and carers who responded to the survey said that overall they were happy with their child's experience at The Bromfords School. Most of them said the school keeps their children safe and that their children enjoy school. While most felt well informed and able to support their child's learning at home a small minority did not feel the school takes sufficient account of their suggestions and concerns nor does enough to make sure their children are prepared well for the future. A few who wrote comments praised highly a variety of aspects of the school's work while others expressed equally strong views that some aspects of provision required improvement. The views of parents and carers reflected inspectors' views that while satisfactory overall there are some inconsistencies in how well the school engages with parents and carers and how well students are prepared for their future economic well being.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Bromfords 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 160 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1203 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	25	107	67	12	8	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	49	31	105	66	6	4	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	43	27	97	61	17	11	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	22	110	69	10	6	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	25	16	115	72	10	6	5	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	12	104	65	28	18	3	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	13	106	66	24	15	2	1
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)	22	14	94	59	19	12	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	20	109	68	14	9	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	13	107	67	18	11	9	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	13	91	57	15	9	6	4
The school is led and managed effectively	30	19	105	66	11	7	3	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	57	36	89	56	6	4	4	3

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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.



19 November 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The Bromfords School, Wickford, SS12 0LZ

You will know that we recently came to inspect your school. Thank you to all of you who took the time to speak to us or tell us your views through the pupil questionnaires. We are very grateful for all the things you have told us.

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education overall but there have been significant improvements over the last twelve months, not least in the most recent examination results where so many of you achieved five or more good passes at GCSE including English and mathematics. Your new headteacher and senior leaders, supported by all members of staff, have focused on raising standards as a first priority and achieved this successfully by supporting those of you who needed extra help. You have played your part too by responding so well to the challenge by your positive attitude to learning in lessons, not just the best and most exciting ones, but even those you find sometimes dull. Achievement overall is satisfactory but improving rapidly. You have told us how you feel safe and enjoy coming to school and your parents and carers have agreed with you about that.

There are a few things that the school needs to do to improve further. Although the extra support you have received has made a huge difference to your examination results, the quality of teaching is not consistent and we have asked the school to make sure it is consistently good by making sure activities are always suitably challenging for you, involving you more in making decisions about your learning and letting you know how well you are doing, especially through written marking. Also some of the best features of the extra support could be incorporated into your regular curriculum. We have asked your subject leaders to make sure they check regularly how well this is happening in lessons.

Thank you for making us feel so welcome at The Bromfords school. I hope you will all rise to the challenge your leaders have set to make your school outstanding and I wish you every success in your future.

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims

Her Majesty's Inspector

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