

The Brittons Academy Trust

Inspection report

Unique reference number	136576
Local authority	Havering
Inspection number	382236
Inspection dates	27–28 June 2012
Lead inspector	Lesley Farmer

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1010
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Cullwick
Principal	Robert Sheffield
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 June 2009
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Age group	11–16
Inspection date(s)	27–28 June 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Lesley Farmer	Additional Inspector
Claire Gillies	Additional Inspector
Hugh Betterton	Additional Inspector
James Coyle	Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection. They observed a total of 40 lessons taught by 40 different teachers. Joint observations were conducted with two senior leaders. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, students and a representative from the local authority and the Academy Trust. Inspectors evaluated students' achievement over three years, examined examples of students' work and looked at key policies, including the school's self-evaluation, development plans and tracking data showing students' progress. Inspectors also analysed the questionnaire responses of 16 parents and carers, 20 staff and 150 students.

Information about the school

The Brittons Academy is a larger than average-sized comprehensive school, with slightly fewer girls than boys. The majority of students are of White British heritage with a smaller proportion being from a wide range of minority ethnic groups, making up the rest of the student population.

The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly higher than the national figures. The proportion of students supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is lower than that found nationally.

The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. Since the last inspection a considerable number of staffing changes have taken place, with several new appointments at a senior level.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school, growing in strength because it is benefiting from ‘hands on’ leadership by the Principal and senior leaders. Accurate evaluation of strengths and weaknesses underpins all leadership activity. Teaching is improving with commensurate impact on achievement. Behaviour and safety are strengths. Overall effectiveness is not yet good because teaching is not securing rapid enough progress. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Achievement is satisfactory. Attainment at GCSE has improved from a low base in 2010 and is now in line with the national average, with a rate of improvement that is faster than that seen nationally. Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve in line with their peers.
- Teaching over time is satisfactory with good and outstanding features. In the best lessons all students, including the most able, achieve well because assessment information informs teachers’ planning, and activity is judiciously executed so as to meet individual needs and to challenge them fully. However, this is not always the case in all subjects. Marking can be inconsistent and teachers do not routinely provide opportunities for students to follow up on the feedback provided.
- Behaviour and safety are strong features. Students are polite and keen to engage positively in their learning. They say they feel safe and they respond particularly well to teaching that actively engages them.
- The principal is highly visible and implacable in his drive for improvement. He is well supported by an able contingent of senior leaders. Strengths in teaching and performance are well known at a senior level and rigorous action is taken to build capacity where weaker practice is identified. Effective training to develop teachers’ repertoires of teaching strategies was evidenced throughout

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the inspection. However, not all middle leaders are clear about how to evaluate the impact of these strategies on learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on recent improvements in achievement, to bring attainment to a level that is higher than that seen nationally by ensuring that teachers:
 - show flexibility of approach in adapting lesson plans to meet students' immediate needs and levels of understanding, and take advantage of unplanned opportunities to extend students' thinking and enquiry
 - adjust their pace and timing of activities to match students' rates of working
 - mark work comprehensively and provide time in lessons for students to respond to their feedback
 - make full use of the assessment information with which they are provided to inform their ability to challenge all students, especially the higher attainers.
- Build the capacity of middle leaders to drive improvement still further by:
 - ensuring that when observing teaching they focus on evaluating the quality of learning and its impact on securing good or outstanding progress for all learners
 - ensuring that they continue to benefit from high quality training and support.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

In lessons, students' progress is variable. Students achieve best when teachers actively engage them in their learning and ensure that activities closely match their capabilities with an appropriate level of challenge. For example, in a Year 9 French lesson, students were tasked to use vocabulary on weather expressions and then provide written and spoken forecasts. The pace of learning was rapid as students were taken through a range of tasks requiring them to interpret and respond at varying levels of difficulty. Engagement and motivation were high and the teacher was astute in her checking of students' understanding, challenging all, including the most able, through targeted questioning on an individual basis. As a result all students made good progress, levels of resilience were high and the learning was fun. However, for a minority of students, notably the more able, too much teacher talk or an insufficient awareness of individuals' prior learning and checking of progress, combined with imprecise feedback on how to improve, yield slower rates of progress overall.

Students join the school with attainment that is average. They make satisfactory progress from their starting points to achieve standards that are in line with the

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national average. The rate of improvement over three years, although variable, is now three times faster than the national rate. Students from different ethnic groups, and those with English as an additional language, achieve as well as their peers. The development of students' mathematical skills is supported by clear strategies referenced across all subject areas. Moreover, it is now effectively underpinned by the much improved teaching of mathematics which is driving up students' progress in this area. A whole school approach to develop the literacy skills of students is now evident in schemes of work, displays, the marking of students' work and the improvements in outcomes across all subjects that are being secured. The progress made by disabled students and those with special educational needs is satisfactory and for some individuals it is good, given their starting points and the level of challenge in their learning that they face. Most parents and carers feel that their child is progressing well. While inspectors found this to be true for some students across most subjects, progress is still too variable for it to be judged good.

Quality of teaching

Teaching over time is satisfactory. Where teaching is better, the learning proceeds rapidly because the planning builds on prior learning and strategies are skilfully tailored to individual needs so as to captivate and challenge; teachers are confident in their use of resources and astute in their judgements of when to move their plans forward, or alternatively to take longer over a planned activity to fully develop the learning that is emerging. Support from additional adults is appropriately focused on developing independence and contributes well to disabled students and those with special educational needs increasingly making good progress. The majority of parents feel that teaching is good, but inspectors agree with views expressed by the students and the school and judge it to be too variable to be good.

In a Year 9 art and design lesson, students were required to apply examination assessment criteria to their own work and that of their peers. Students worked in groups assessing assignments and were then required to justify their judgements to the teacher and fellow students. All students progressed well. The teacher circulated quizzing individuals and at varying intervals she halted group activity challenging judgements further, thereby requiring them to reflect at a deeper level. Levels of engagement were high and student resilience and confidence were strong as the students quickly developed an understanding of their own strengths and areas for further development.

In less effective lessons, opportunities for active and independent learning are more limited. In these lessons there is a tendency for too much teacher talk and a reluctance to adapt lesson plans to follow up a response that might lead to more imaginative and instructive lines of enquiry or ensure that aspects only partially understood are explored in different ways. More able students are not always challenged to extend their thinking or to be inventive. Whilst some teachers' marking provides comprehensive feedback on what needs to improve and how, time is rarely formalised in lessons to ensure that this happens, so that often written feedback is left unanswered.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students are naturally courteous, friendly and polite. They take an evident pride in being part of the school community and were keen to advise inspectors of the improvements made. They say they feel safe in school and parents and carers agree. Students assert that disruption to learning is rare, but when it does occur it is dealt with rapidly and effectively by staff. This is borne out by the impressive rates of fixed term exclusion, which are extremely rare, and the reduction in the rates of permanent exclusion.

Attendance has been below average in the past, but through determined work by the school with students overall, and with those where there are concerns, it is now above the national average and rising. Students are punctual, keen learners. They understand the nature of risk and act responsibly. Curriculum programmes, such as the excellent provision for citizenship, ensure that students develop a keen awareness of how to behave towards each other and of right and wrong. On questioning, they have a clear awareness of racist, homophobic and other types of bullying that can occur. They report that low level bullying can happen from time to time, but that it is almost always cleared up quickly if reported to staff.

Exemplary safeguarding and care arrangements designed to include and support all students, combined with good relationships and mutual respect, ensure that all learners know that adults in the school will help them if they have a problem. Those that have difficulty in behaving properly receive highly effective tailored support. The school is very responsive to the community that it serves and is successful in enabling most students to stay in school and learn, with a good focus on students at risk, so as to intervene. Effective links with external agencies to support families when needed are valued by all concerned.

Leadership and management

After an unsettled period of staffing changes at a senior and wider-school level, the Principal has set an unequivocal agenda for improvement that is evidently supported by leaders at all levels. The governing body too provide a strong steer. A relentless focus on teaching and learning, together with rigorous tracking and monitoring of students across all subjects to identify those that are vulnerable to under-achievement, has halted a decline in progress. Intervention strategies have been effectively implemented, leading to much improved outcomes in 2011 and stronger assessment information for the 2012 cohort.

Weaker teaching has been accurately identified and training programmes have been developed to coach and support teachers in improving their range of teaching strategies. The approach has been effective, with the wide majority of teachers feeling supported to improve their practice. The school has been successful in improving outcomes for students since the last inspection, despite the challenges faced with recruitment of staff. The rapid rate of improvement attests to a strong

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capacity to secure further gains. Whilst the effectiveness of the training programme is evident in the range of teaching strategies developed across all subjects, the impact of teaching on learning has not been effectively gauged by all at a middle level. In some instances teachers are implementing too many activities that do not accelerate students' learning, either because they are too superficial to the teachers' plans or because undue time is spent on them to no specific gain.

The school has developed a balanced curriculum that meets the needs and interests of its students. The planned provision is effective in its promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, with notable strength in its provision for citizenship. This is effectively supplemented by a range of enrichment activities that involve visits, guest speakers and international trips. Ensuring equality of opportunity for all is a high priority and leaders do not tolerate discrimination. Their success in this area is evidenced through the achievements of different ethnic groups which are predominantly in line with their peers. Safeguarding arrangements, the recording of checks carried out on staff and the risk assessment of premises are robust.

Since joining an academy chain in 2011, students regularly experience exchange visits with the lead academy, which also serve to strengthen the school's aim to build students' esteem and their confidence to aspire to excellence.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.

29 June 2012

Dear Students



Inspection of The Brittons Academy Trust, Rainham RM13 7BB

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. Particular thanks to those of you who completed questionnaires or gave up time to meet with us. We judged your school to be satisfactory and improving.

The Principal and all staff are working hard to ensure that you achieve your very best. The approach is working well. It has effected some impressive improvements in the last eighteen months in achievement, teaching and other aspects, such as your attendance and punctuality to school and the improvements in behaviour which are real strengths. Everyone connected with the school is determined that you should succeed and your response to their efforts has been exemplary.

The school's high expectations and the staff's belief in you provide you with a good platform for learning and help you prepare successfully for life beyond school. You told us you feel safe and your behaviour in and around school and positive attitudes to learning in lessons are to your credit.

In order for you to do even better, we have asked that your teachers do the following:

- ensure that they always mark your work fully providing you with details of what to improve and how to do it and provide you with time in lessons to respond to their marking
- ensure that in lessons they challenge you through their questioning or the activities they organise for you, to achieve your very best
- adjust their lesson plans if they feel you are falling behind or racing ahead
- think carefully about what teaching strategies bring about the best learning for you all and factor this into their timing of various activities.

You told us that the school has changed for the better in recent times. We agree and I trust that you will seize every opportunity in your time left at The Brittons Academy Trust to challenge yourselves still further. You can help by ensuring that your punctuality and above average attendance rates are maintained, and by responding positively to your teachers by completing all tasks and challenging yourselves to steadfastly give of your best.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Farmer
Lead inspector

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