

The Brittons Academy Trust

Ford Lane, Rainham, Essex, RM13 7BB

Inspection dates 4–5 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Achievement is inadequate because too many students do not make sufficient progress from their starting points.
- The quality of teaching is still too variable across the academy and its impact on learning is inadequate. Not all teachers are sufficiently skilled at meeting the needs of students with different abilities or in ensuring that all students take a full and active part in their learning.
- Achievement is particularly weak in mathematics and science. The proportion of students making at least adequate progress is consistently low and too few make good progress. Not enough more-able students make the progress needed to secure the best GCSE grades.
- The progress and attainment of students eligible for the pupil premium funding and those with a disability or special educational need is inadequate, and is well below that of other students at the school.
- Students' behaviour requires improvement because some lose interest and concentration when teaching does not interest them. This prevents them making progress in some lessons.

The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed Principal has made an excellent start. There are now higher expectations for what students can achieve and there have been improvements in attendance and behaviour in lessons.
- The Principal and the Vice Principal have been unwavering in their determination to improve the quality of teaching as well as the quality of middle leadership in the academy. As a result students' attainment is improving.
- Leaders, particularly at a senior and governing body level, are demonstrating the capacity to improve. They are clear about the issues to be addressed, and as a result, the academy is now beginning to improve rapidly.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 32 lessons; some of these lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with the Principal and a number of senior staff. The inspectors also took account of 43 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked closely at the academy’s work, including the academy’s analysis of how well it is doing and its improvement plans. The inspectors also looked at the academy’s information on students’ progress and students’ work as well at documents relating to behaviour and safeguarding and minutes of meetings of the governing body. They also looked at attendance and exclusion information.
- Meetings were held with two groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 23 responses from parents recorded in the online questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Moazam Parvez, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Angela Skinner	Additional Inspector
Kevin Morris	Additional Inspector
Susan Willman	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- The academy is a slightly larger-than-average secondary school. The school became an academy from 1 April 2011 and is linked in an educational partnership with another school.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is in line with the national average and includes a small percentage of students who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportions of disabled students and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are slightly above average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- An above-average proportion of the students are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding provided for students who are known to be eligible for free schools meals, are looked after or are from service families).
- Last year there were no students who attended off-site alternative education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching so that it is always good or better, and thereby raise achievement, particularly in mathematics and science by ensuring that:
 - inadequate and weak teaching is quickly eradicated
 - all teachers have high expectations of students and use assessment information more effectively to provide lessons that closely match the needs of all students
 - students are given clear, regular and helpful feedback on their work so they know and understand how to improve.
 - improve the attitude to learning of some students by providing them with activities that engage and motivate them.
- Improve students' achievement by:
 - ensuring that good progress is made by different groups, particularly those eligible for the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs
 - ensuring there is a greater focus on more-able students, by increasing the level of challenge and support and by raising expectations of staff and students.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers further by:
 - providing opportunities for teachers and middle leaders to learn from the good practice that exists in the academy and from the partner school
 - ensuring that all middle leaders carefully check the quality of teaching and students' learning and progress in their area of responsibility, and challenge staff if students are not achieving their full potential.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Students underachieve in many subjects, particularly in mathematics and science. As a result, their achievement overall is inadequate.
- More-able students make inadequate progress in a range of subjects because teachers do not have high enough expectations of them. The proportion of students attaining grades A* and A at GCSE is significantly below national levels in all key subjects.
- Students make poor progress in mathematics from their starting points. This means that standards in this subject are too low. In 2013, just over half the students made the expected amount of progress in mathematics by the end of Year 11. However, improvements in teaching are now ensuring that students make better progress
- Gaps between the attainment of students known to be eligible for free school meals and other students at the school have increased since last year. In 2013, the gap for English, mathematics and science was equivalent to about one GCSE grade. However, the academy's recent success at driving up the achievement of the free school meals group has meant that this group is on track for the gap to close in 2014.
- The attainment and progress of students supported through the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding are well below that of other students. This is now being addressed by the academy by focusing on their needs more closely. However, the academy's internal tracking suggests that although there is an improvement in their achievement the gaps are still too wide.
- Although 2013 GCSE results were slightly improved, they are still well below national levels. A significant proportion of students join the academy with attainment which is below the national average and do not close gaps in knowledge, skills and understanding before they leave.
- The new Principal, appointed at the start of the year, has implemented numerous strategies to tackle underachievement in the academy. These include: 'weekly progress chaser' meetings that have been introduced to track and monitor students; additional skilled teaching assistants in English and mathematics; setting of more challenging targets for Years 10 and 11 students; and targeted training for staff to support better teaching and learning. The inspection evidence from lesson observations, students' work and discussions with staff shows improving rates of student progress despite the fact that, overall, achievement remains inadequate.
- The academy has previously entered students for GCSE English and mathematics before the end of Year 11 which resulted in too many students not achieving the higher grades. The academy has now changed its policy on early examination entry. No students are now being entered early for GCSE examinations.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make inadequate progress. This means that their attainment is significantly less than other students at the school and below what it should be.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Over time, the quality of teaching has not been good enough to secure adequate outcomes for students. In particular, the quality of teaching in mathematics has failed to secure the necessary improvements and students' progress has remained low.
- In mathematics, some students are held back from making better progress because the teaching does not provide them with enough understanding of how to apply the mathematical rules they are taught.
- In too many lessons, the pace of learning is too slow and does not demand enough from students. Teachers do not use their knowledge of students' previous learning to make sure work is set at the right level. As a result, too many lessons are based on the whole class completing the same task which prevents more able students from doing as well as they could.

- The quality of classroom support for disabled students and those with special educational needs varies considerably. Not all teaching assistants are deployed to good effect by classroom teachers. The teaching assistants supporting disabled students and those with special educational needs are not sufficiently involved in the planning of the lessons with teachers to identify the next stages of pupils' learning. The academy has recognised this as an issue and is monitoring this aspect of provision more closely.
- Books are usually marked well and areas for improvement are identified. However, there are still times when students are not given the opportunity to respond fully to teachers' comments.
- In the best lessons activities were carefully matched to students' abilities and teachers had high expectations of students' progress. For example, in a very effective mathematics lesson in Year 11, the teacher used a variety of tasks to explain probability, linked to roulette, which extended and challenged students of different abilities and moved their learning on rapidly.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well at the academy, particularly through assemblies and in humanities lessons. Students have opportunities to discuss a wide range of issues in religious education lessons and in tutorial time there is a thought for the day that focuses on spiritual and moral issues. However, there is a need to develop this across all curriculum areas.
- Good support for students who have weaknesses in literacy, particularly in Year 7, means that they are helped to improve reading and writing skills. Additional Year 7 catch-up funding is used well to provide targeted one-to-one and small group support for those students who did not achieve Level 4 in reading. This means that these students catch up quickly with their peers. Similar additional support for numeracy is more recent and has not had the same impact yet.
- Strategies introduced by the new Principal include 'Teaching and Learning Communities' where staff work together to provide each other with support and feedback. Supported by a lead practitioner, they allow the sharing of good practice across the academy. This is beginning to have a positive impact on the quality and consistency of teaching.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Students' behaviour and safety require improvement because too often in lessons students' attitudes to learning suffer when teaching is less effective so resulting in off-task chatter and low-level disruption.
- Students feel safe and have a clear understanding of what makes an unsafe situation. They were able to talk knowledgeably about e-safety and the dangers of internet sites and chat rooms. Students are taught about different forms of bullying, including homophobic and racist bullying, and know what to do if they witness or experience it.
- Students recognise the impact the new Principal has had on the academy in a very short time. Despite the overall effectiveness of the academy being inadequate, students' views of improvements being made are very positive.
- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the academy is often exemplary. The very large majority of parents, students and staff report that bullying is rare and that when incidents do occur they are dealt with quickly and effectively. This contributes to students feeling safe in the academy.
- The academy's records show that attendance has improved and is now average. The attendance of most groups that previously did not attend regularly has improved, particularly for boys whose persistent absence has been considerably reduced. Attendance is a high priority and the academy has comprehensive and robust arrangements to reduce absences that include working with primary schools to instil good habits around attendance.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The academy has not yet effectively addressed the issues identified in the previous inspection report. Consequently its performance has declined and the quality of teaching and students' achievement is inadequate. However the new Principal and his team are now making rapid improvements to the academy and demonstrating that there is the capacity to improve further.
- The new Principal and Vice Principal are having a very positive impact. Students' behaviour and attendance has improved. Improvements in teaching and the targeting of additional support in Years 10 and 11 are raising attainment. Consequently, under this new, strong leadership the academy is demonstrating that it can improve further.
- The Principal has initiated strategies to challenge and reduce underperformance of students. However, the full impact of this work has yet to be seen. There is now more support for middle leaders to ensure they are more effective in raising standards in their areas of responsibility.
- The local authority is developing closer links with the academy and there are plans to increase support to the academy and the governing body.
- Some effective action has been taken where teachers are found to be underperforming. The high level of accountability is motivating staff to improve. Performance is improving because staff have more access to training and support, for example through the National College to improve their effectiveness.
- The Principal has introduced strategies to develop the skills and expertise of middle leaders to hold teachers to account. However, some middle leaders still require help to evaluate teaching and hold staff to account for the performance of students. This area has rightly been identified as a priority for the leadership team to develop further with early positive signs of success.
- Senior leaders and the governing body are clear about the priorities to be addressed and have taken appropriate action, for instance the academy is now ensuring that pupil premium funding is targeted more effectively in order to improve the progress of this group.
- A new 'pathways' curriculum has been introduced to provide better opportunities for all students to achieve their potential. This includes appropriate academic and vocational courses which are more closely matched to the students' needs.
- The academy's arrangements for safeguarding students meet all current statutory requirements.

- **The governance of the school:**
 - Improvements in the management of the academy have been reflected in changes to the governing body. This restructuring has supported the improvements being made by leaders. Governors are now more aware of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching at the academy. They recognise that inadequate teaching cannot be accepted and have taken action to ensure the improvements in teaching and achievement of students continue, particularly in mathematics.
 - Governors now have a good awareness of how teachers' performance is managed and they ensure that only effective teaching is rewarded by pay and promotion. They are fully supportive of the ways in which the Principal is tackling any remaining underperformance in teaching.
 - Governors know how well the academy is performing and what needs to be done to improve students' progress. They know how the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding is spent. They now carefully monitor the achievement of students who receive support from this additional funding to make certain that the money is being spent in an effective way.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	136576
Local authority	Havering
Inspection number	429973
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1000
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sharon Roots
Headteacher	Stuart McLaughlin
Date of previous school inspection	27–28 June 2012
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