

The Bromfords School and Sixth Form College

Grange Avenue, Wickford, SS12 0LZ

Inspection dates 28–29 January 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Students leave the school with levels of attainment in GCSE examinations that are below the national average. Their achievement is inadequate and is particularly poor in English, modern foreign languages and humanities.
- Students' progress is poor. They make slower progress in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4.
- Teachers have low expectations of what students can achieve and how they should behave. The quality of teaching is inadequate.
- Assessment information is often inaccurate and does not support teaching or promote progress.
- The poor behaviour of a significant minority of students disrupts the learning of others.
- Behaviour around the school is frequently poor.
- Leadership and governance have been ineffective in raising the standards of teaching or behaviour.
- The sixth form requires improvement because too few students achieve higher grades and the quality of teaching is variable.

The school has the following strengths

- Very recent changes in leadership, including governance, are already beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of education.
- Most students are keen to learn and behave well. They feel safe, despite the behaviour of a significant minority of students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 46 lessons. Some of these were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also listened to students reading.
- Inspectors took account of 110 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and an additional 20 written responses from parents.
- Inspectors took account of 50 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors analysed examination and assessment results for 2012 and 2013. They scrutinised the school's current assessment data, students' work, school policies, safeguarding documentation, external evaluations and the school's self-evaluation documents.
- Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, students and four members of the governing body. Inspectors spoke over the telephone to an external consultant who has been supporting the school.

Inspection team

Christopher Moodie, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Charlie Henry	Her Majesty's Inspector
Angela Podmore	Additional Inspector
Michael Stanton	Additional Inspector
Heather Housden	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- This secondary school is larger than average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for certain groups of disadvantaged students, is below average. Five of these students are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of educational needs is average.
- Since the previous inspection the school has restructured its leadership team. The previous headteacher left the school during the autumn term of 2013. A deputy headteacher also left shortly before this. An acting headteacher and an executive headteacher are in post until the end of the academic year. A new deputy headteacher started in January 2014. The governing body is in the process of recruiting a permanent headteacher.
- The governing body has restructured since the previous inspection. Several governors have left and have been replaced. A new Chair of the Governing Body is in place.
- The school uses the following providers for alternative provision: Prospect College and Jet (hair and beauty), Rally (motor mechanics), South Essex College, Crown College and Circles Farm.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school was inspected in June 2013 and was judged to require improvement. It has since received two visits from one of Her Majesty's Inspectors during which it was found to be making insufficient progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that:
 - all teaching is consistently good or better
 - all teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve
 - assessment data are used to promote more effective learning
 - students receive useful feedback about their work in all lessons.
- Improve achievement across the school so that:
 - more students gain higher grades at the end of Key Stage 4
 - students in Key Stage 3 make much more rapid progress
 - levels of literacy, including grammar, reading, punctuation and handwriting are raised
 - gaps in attainment between different subjects are closed.
- Improve the standard of behaviour across the school so that:
 - lessons are not disrupted by poor behaviour
 - students show respect for one another and the school staff
 - the behaviour code is rigorously adhered to in all classes and around the school corridors, and

shared areas are calm and orderly.

- Improve leadership and management at all levels so that:
 - senior and middle leaders set, and take responsibility for maintaining, the highest expectations of behaviour in lessons and around the school
 - assessment systems support teaching and promote learning
 - leaders at all levels are trained to be more effective in evaluating progress
 - middle leaders take account of primary school data when preparing work for Year 7.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is inadequate

- Students underachieve in most subjects, but particularly in English, humanities and modern foreign languages. Examination results in 2013 showed that, despite improving slightly since the previous year, students' attainment was lower than the national average.
- The numbers of students achieving the higher grades of A* and A in the majority of subjects are very low. This is especially the case in core and additional science, English language, French and history. In contrast, a high number of students achieve these grades in physics, chemistry, physical education (PE) and media studies.
- Students have made less progress than they should for the past three years. The poor quality of progress data prevents the school from knowing how well individual students are doing.
- The current system of assessment for students in Key Stage 3 is very poor. Evidence that students are making enough progress is patchy. Work in books indicates that students, especially those who are less able, are making very slow progress and some are making no progress at all.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium make less progress than other students. In 2013 the gap between their attainment in Year 11 and that of other students widened to nearly two thirds of a GCSE grade in English and one grade in mathematics, and the school did not do enough to close it. This year the funding is being used more effectively to help and guide eligible students and the gap is beginning to narrow.
- Students who have special educational needs underachieve. School leaders responsible for this area do not know how effectively support for these students is working.
- Students' presentation and handwriting are frequently poor. In many exercise books, the work is untidy and students' writing is careless and littered with errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is not spent effectively. It is used to support reading, but students who enter the school as weak readers do not make enough progress. The school disregards Key Stage 2 reading assessment information and reassesses all students. Students it identifies as weak readers are not taught effective strategies to enable them to read new words. Too many students rely heavily on guesswork when reading and do not make progress.
- Students currently in Year 11 are on track to improve upon last year's results. The outcomes of English GCSE taken in the autumn term 2013 show an improvement. The school does not have an early entry policy for any other subjects. Recent 'mock' GCSE results demonstrate the ongoing inconsistency across subjects, with some (such as chemistry and biology) doing very well and others (the humanities, core science and additional science) continuing to produce poor results.
- Achievement in the sixth form requires improvement. Predictions for current students show a similar pattern to those in the past, as too few are on track to achieve the higher grades. The sixth form continues to be more successful in BTEC qualifications than it is in 'A' and 'AS' level, although the progress of students currently working towards 'AS' level has recently accelerated.

- Regular progress reports are received from providers of alternative provision. These indicate that students are achieving satisfactorily and that the placements are appropriate. A school coordinator makes weekly visits to ensure that students are attending and that the provision meets expected standards.

The quality of teaching is inadequate

- The effectiveness of teaching varies enormously throughout the school. This variation means that many students' experience of lessons is not good enough and that the quality of teaching is inadequate.
- Some teachers have very low expectations of what students can achieve and how well they should behave. Too often, lessons do not start well as teachers try ineffectively to deal with poor behaviour. The work that some teachers ask students to do is often too easy or too hard.
- The weakest teaching is often in the lower-attaining sets. This has had a huge impact on students in these classes, where expectations of behaviour, and teachers' capacity to manage it, are poor. One teacher told inspectors that teaching some of the lower sets was 'very, very difficult because they just don't want to learn'. This is not the case, but many of these students have become accustomed to poor teaching and have lost their interest in learning. Vivaly, many students told inspectors that they wanted to learn but could not, either because of poor teaching or poor behaviour management.
- Where teaching is good or better, students are very clear about what they are expected to do, they respond very well and make good progress. The work offers challenge and staff hold students to account for their behaviour; as a result, learning is at the centre of the lesson and students are interested and motivated.
- Students receive marking and feedback in most of their lessons. The frequency of the marking has generally improved, but some students' work has not been marked since the beginning of November 2013. The quality of the marking also varies. Where marking is most effective, students are involved in the process, responding to teachers' comments and demonstrating that they understand how to improve their work.
- The school introduced a revised teaching and learning policy in January 2014. It contains 10 'non-negotiables' that should feature in every lesson, including (amongst others) elements such as questioning, planning, marking and behaviour. Teachers are not consistently adopting this policy and this is adding to students' confusion. One student in Year 9 said, 'It all depends on which teacher you get – some apply the rules, and others just don't.'
- Teaching in the sixth form requires improvement. In some subjects, such as physics, media and law, the teaching is strong, and this is reflected in the examination results. The assessment and marking of students' work have improved since November, when the school introduced its revised marking approach. However, they remain variable and students say that they get much better feedback in some subjects than in others.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate

- The behaviour of students in lessons is inadequate. A significant minority of students disrupt too many lessons. Inspectors observed students eating, drinking and chewing. Too often, students call out, shout, make rude remarks and show little respect for their fellow students or their teachers. As a result, learning suffers and often halts as teachers struggle to manage the

challenging behaviour of these few students.

- Behaviour around the school is also inadequate. Corridors and stair-wells are noisy and often rowdy. Students shout at one another, and pushing and shoving occurs as students move from one lesson to another. This has a negative impact on the start of many lessons, when teachers have to spend too much time settling down students. The same elements of poor behaviour occur during lunch and break-times.
- The majority of students behave well, and are polite and friendly. The standard of behaviour in some lessons is outstanding. This was seen in a PE lesson where students encouraged one another, followed coaching guidance and successfully incorporated it into their work. In another lesson, this time in a Year 7 'Innovations' lesson, students worked hard and presented their work with great pride. They helped each other without being asked and were eager to learn.
- There is a clear link between the quality of teaching and the standard of behaviour. The school's strategy of linking the better teachers to higher ability classes means that behaviour is particularly bad in lower ability sets. This jeopardises the opportunities for many students to learn. One student told inspectors that 'Something has got to change. I can't learn in any of my lessons and I have to work really hard at home to catch up.' Many students whose lessons are regularly ruined by low standards of behaviour related the same stark story to inspectors.
- Students understand about the different types of bullying and are clear about how the misuse of social media can lead to serious problems. They say that bullying is uncommon in the school and that it is generally dealt with effectively.
- Parents are rightly concerned about the standard of behaviour in the school. Only 60% of those who responded to the online questionnaire felt that the school makes sure that its students are well behaved. In addition, only 64% believe that the school deals effectively with bullying.
- Behaviour in the sixth form requires improvement. It is significantly better than in the rest of the school and improves as students get older. Students generally have positive attitudes to their work but some, especially those in Year 12, do not work hard enough in lessons.
- The school's work to keep students safe requires improvement because of the poor behaviour in lessons and around the school. Students are safe within school but the school does not systematically log and analyse behavioural incidents. Leadership in this area is not sufficiently focused on improving outcomes for students through finding out why students may be misbehaving.
- Attendance has improved significantly since the previous inspection, when it was very low. The school's recent strategies, such as calling home on the first day of absence, have had a very positive impact and overall attendance is now in line with national figures.
- The number of exclusions has decreased dramatically over the last two terms. New strategies to tackle poor behaviour have been introduced, but the standard of behaviour around the school and in lessons has not improved.
- Students generally feel safe in the school. They have increased confidence in the new leadership and know that their form tutors will help them if necessary.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- The school's leadership is inadequate. Current leaders have inherited a range of difficult problems which lead to students' underachievement, but their actions are not having enough impact on eradicating them.
- Leaders at all levels do not have high enough expectations of behaviour. A legacy of inaction in the face of poor behaviour is resulting in students' underachievement. Learning is suffering in lessons where teachers are not able to manage disruptive behaviour and do not receive effective support from senior leaders.
- There is insufficient expertise amongst senior and middle leaders. They are ineffective in the monitoring and evaluation of students' outcomes. An example of this is seen in the English department, where teachers have only met once to moderate their assessments and check that all teachers are making consistent judgements. A random check on this showed inspectors that three students judged to be at the same level in their writing are actually working at very different levels. This inaccuracy invalidates assessment data and renders impossible the task of setting of appropriately aspirational targets for students.
- The new leadership team has significantly increased the amount of classroom monitoring that the senior leaders do each week. This is a step in the right direction, but senior leaders are not using their observations to demonstrate to both staff and students the high expectations that are needed. They intervene too little.
- The assessment system that the school has used until very recently was inadequate. The new leaders recognised that it was not fit for purpose and set about implementing a new approach. This is now in place in Key Stage 4, but is not yet working for Key Stage 3. As a result, teachers and leaders have little understanding of the progress being made in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Assessment information is not used well enough across the school. This is of the greatest concern in Year 7, where detailed assessment information provided by the national tests in Year 6 is ignored. The school reassesses the students during the first term of Year 7 and a great deal of time is wasted. This is exacerbated by the inaccuracies found in teachers' assessments.
- Leadership in the sixth form requires improvement. The monitoring of teaching is not sufficiently developed to remove the inconsistencies that exist. New systems of assessment are already showing improvements in both teachers' planning and students' outcomes.
- Policies to promote equality of opportunity are ineffective because of the underachievement of several groups of students, including those with special educational needs and low-attaining students.
- The school provides students with access to independent information, advice and guidance to prepare them for the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- Safeguarding systems and procedures meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - An external review of the governing body was undertaken in the autumn term 2013. The resulting action plan is being implemented and governance has improved.
 - Very recent changes in the governing body have positively altered the way that they hold school leaders to account. Governors have a keener view of what the information that school

leaders provide actually means in terms of students' outcomes.

- Governors commissioned an external review of the school's performance in the autumn term in order to enhance their understanding, with a particular focus on the quality of teaching. This was undertaken by the local authority in December 2013. Governors have recently received the draft report and have a clearer understanding of where teaching is strong and where it needs to be supported.
- Governors are regular visitors to the school. However, they are currently spending too much time on paperwork during these visits, and are not taking these opportunities to see the work of the school first-hand.
- Governors check that school leaders complete the annual review of teachers' pay. Procedures to tackle underperformance of teaching staff have been recently reviewed.
- Governors receive information on how the pupil premium funding is spent. They have checked on the impact of the spending and are aware that it is improving this year.
- The governing body has worked alongside external consultants, and the local authority, to tackle the challenges that the school faces. A good deal of time has been spent in restoring stability to the school's senior leadership. The very recent appointments of the executive headteacher and deputy headteacher have added strength to the work that the acting headteacher began before Christmas. The governing body has a clear strategy for the future of the school and is currently involved in the recruitment of a permanent headteacher.

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	139181
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	439427

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1210
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Don Morris
Headteacher	Richard Westergreen-Thorne
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2013
Telephone number	01268 471201
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