

The Bromfords School and Sixth Form College

Grange Avenue, Wickford, SS12 0LZ

Inspection dates 18–19 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement in science and some foundation subjects is not improving at the same rate as it is in English, mathematics and other subjects.
- The achievement of students known to be eligible for free school meals is not rising at the same rate as other students.
- The attendance of students eligible for free school meals and those who are disabled or have special educational needs is below that of others.
- Alternative arrangements made to educate students off-site do not always enable them to attain essential qualifications in English and mathematics.
- Procedures to strengthen students' literacy skills are not firmly embedded.
- The sixth form requires improvement because not all students studying A-level courses achieve well enough. The strategies to raise achievement in the main school do not extend fully into Years 12 and 13.
- Teaching is inconsistent because not all staff apply agreed priorities for planning different learning tasks, marking students' work and managing their behaviour.
- Not enough teaching captivates students' interest, or challenges and inspires more-able students.
- The marking of books sometimes ignores the poor quality and quantity of work produced by some students.
- Some teachers do not prevent a small minority of students from misbehaving in lessons and interrupting the learning of others. Referring them to the school's exclusion room is not modifying their behaviour.
- Governors are not checking that additional funding is ensuring that students joining Year 7 who have not attained the expected levels in English and mathematics, and those known to be eligible for free school meals, achieve as well as they should.

The school has the following strengths

- Students' achievement has risen significantly. Results are high in GCSE courses in Key Stage 4 and vocational courses in the sixth form.
- The headteacher is driving improvement and fostering a culture of high expectations and aspirations.
- Improved assessment procedures provide staff with an accurate picture of students' progress.
- Teaching is improving due to regular training and monitoring. Staff are held to account for students' achievement.
- Procedures to keep students safe are good. Far fewer students are excluded from school.
- Overall attendance is high.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 28 lessons, four of which were seen jointly with a senior leader.
- Meetings were held with senior, subject and other leaders, three groups of students, four members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at the online questionnaire (Parent View) but an insufficient number of responses had been made for these to be made available to inspectors.
- The inspection team observed the school's work, scrutinised data about students' achievement, behaviour and attendance, looked at the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, reviewed minutes of the meetings of the governing body and scrutinised students' work in lessons.

Inspection team

John Mitcheson, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Susan Hargadon

Additional Inspector

Richard Owen

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are White British. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is low.
- Around one in nine of the students are disabled or have special educational needs. This is below the national average.
- At around one in five, the proportion of students that are disadvantaged and eligible for the pupil premium (government funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- Alternative arrangements are made to educate a small minority of students off the school site, at Prospects College, Jet Hair Academy, South Essex College, Crown College, Essex Youth Services (SPACE) and Circles Farm.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school was inspected in January 2014 and placed in special measures. Significant weaknesses were found in the quality of teaching, the achievement and behaviour of students, and in the leadership and management of the school.
- At its first monitoring inspection in June 2014, an executive headteacher and an acting headteacher were leading the school on an interim basis. Since then, a new, permanent headteacher has taken up his role. The acting headteacher has returned to his role as deputy headteacher. The executive headteacher has been retained for 12 days this term to support the transition to new leadership of the school.
- The governing body have recently restructured and formed a task group to oversee the progress made in improving the school.
- Inspectors were aware during the inspection that serious allegations of a child protection nature were being investigated by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the allegation were considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching consistently good in all key stages by:
 - ensuring that the agreed priorities for planning different tasks, marking students' work and managing their behaviour are applied by all teachers in every lesson
 - regularly checking that teachers' marking improves students' presentation and makes sure that they complete all work
 - targeting specific training, support and challenge towards those teachers who need it most, particularly in science and some foundation subjects.
 - using the school's best practitioners to model teaching that captivates students' interest and inspires and motivates students of all abilities to work hard.
- Raise the achievement of all students by:
 - making leaders and teachers in science and some foundation subjects fully accountable for the standards achieved by students
 - ensuring that all students, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, attend equally as well as other students
 - regularly checking that students eligible for the pupil premium and 'catch-up' funding are making the same improved progress as others and taking decisive action if these checks show that these students are not achieving well enough

- ensuring that all students taught off-site receive the teaching and support they need to attain essential qualifications, especially in English and mathematics
- embedding newly introduced procedures to reinforce students' literacy skills.

■ Improve the sixth form by:

- extending the strategies used in the main school in order to improve teaching and raise achievement in the sixth form
- holding leaders and teachers fully to account for the achievement of students, particularly those studying A-level courses.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Since the last inspection, senior leaders have prioritised raising achievement in Key Stage 4. The impact of this is clearly seen in the much-improved GCSE results this year.
- Procedures to monitor the progress made in resolving the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection remain in place. This has enabled the new headteacher to maintain the pace of change and secure rapid improvements to the quality of teaching and assessment, students' achievement and behaviour. A large team of senior leaders, coordinators to develop excellence in teaching and four new lead practitioners are demonstrating that the school has the capacity to improve further.
- The headteacher's vision for the school is establishing a culture and ethos in which expectations of staff and students are high and teachers' confidence and competence are rising. He has quickly gained their support by providing them with professional development to increase their effectiveness and by supporting them in managing students' behaviour.
- Self-evaluation is thorough and informs detailed plans aimed at driving further improvement. Rigorous procedures to manage the performance of staff have identified where good practice lies and where improvements are needed. Improved assessment procedures are enabling senior leaders to intervene and take action to prevent students from underachieving.
- Routine monitoring of teaching is giving senior leaders a clear overview of the school's growing strengths and areas for development. Currently, this is mostly carried out by senior leaders and expert practitioners. Plans are in place to train more subject leaders to do this, and to strengthen the leadership of subjects that are underperforming.
- Although overall results are sharply up on previous years, leaders have had less impact in ensuring that all students achieve well, in particular those eligible for the pupil premium and catch-up premium and those who are educated off-site.
- The curriculum includes a broad range of GCSE subjects and a few vocational qualifications. This year, more time has been allocated to teach English and mathematics in both key stages, and for humanities and science in Key Stage 3. This is quite new and has not been evaluated to gauge the impact it is having on raising achievement. A wide range of enrichment activities, including sport, music, photography, homework club, study support and regular access to the library, are enjoyed by many students.
- The school engages with external agencies to provide students with careers advice. Students in Year 9 receive training in interview skills. An 'apprentice roadshow' is held for Year 10 students each year. Year 11 students attend interviews to help them make informed choices about the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Most students enjoy school and engage in a wide range of activities. Weekly personal development lessons, tutorials and assemblies provide opportunities to discuss and reflect upon social and ethical issues, the law and learn about the beliefs of people from different religious and cultural backgrounds. The school's house system and student council, and visits to Parliament and the local Youth Council, enable students to see democracy in action.
- Partnerships with local primary schools, a teaching school and with parents and carers are being forged to ensure that the improvements being made are sustained. The regular training for staff and governors provided by the local authority is valued by school leaders.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are rightly proud of their decision to appoint the new headteacher and are pleased with the immediate impact he is having. They feel that the information and data they are given is much more accurate and that their own 'data dashboard' gives them with a clearer view of the school's effectiveness. They show a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

- The governing body's statutory duties are carried out effectively. One governor is charged with making regular checks of the school's safeguarding arrangements, including the single central record. Governors carried out a full review of safeguarding this year. They oversee the management of teachers' performance. Not all teachers progressed up the pay scale this year because increases were dependent on their students making good progress.
- Governors acknowledge that they have not done enough to monitor the impact of external funding to raise the achievement of disadvantaged students. A task-group formed to oversee the school's development, and the appointment of three recently retired experienced headteachers, has increased their capacity to improve this.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. Inspectors found that when teaching fails to capture students' interest, or does not motivate or inspire them, some become passive and do not make enough progress. They do not work hard or respond keenly to teachers' questioning.
- Not all teachers apply the agreed procedures to manage behaviour. This leads to a small minority of students spoiling the learning of others. Older students feel that some teachers need to be stricter with these students because too much teachers' time is spent sorting them out rather than helping those eager to learn. Students feel that the progress they make in English and in science depends on the teachers they have, and how effectively they manage behaviour.
- The proportion of students who are excluded from school or who are referred to the internal inclusion room is much smaller than last year. However, often the same students are referred, showing that this sanction is having little impact on modifying their behaviour.
- Students say that behaviour has improved and is much better than in the past. They value the recognition and rewards they receive for good behaviour. Many students take responsibility as prefects, school councillors and house-captains. They wear their uniforms and their badges for achievement, regular attendance and commitment, with pride. The students who met with inspectors during the inspection were great ambassadors for their school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Rigorous procedures are in place to safeguard students. The single central record is routinely checked, and detailed records are kept of the actions taken to keep vulnerable students safe and free from harm. Detailed risk assessments are completed prior to all off-site educational visits. Staff are given a handy 'pocket guide' so they know what to do if they have concerns about students' safety.
- Outside of lessons, in corridors and the playground, students behave well, and they are courteous and respectful. They feel that the presence of the headteacher and other staff around school helps to maintain good discipline and makes it a friendly and safe place to be.
- School records confirm the views of students that bullying is rare. When it does occur, mostly in the form of name-calling and use of homophobic language, students say that pastoral leaders help them to stop it. Pupils feel that anti-bullying assemblies and ambassadors to prevent bullying help to keep them safe.
- Weekly lessons and tutorials teach students about the dangers of drug taking and the risks involved in using the internet. Students know who to talk to if they receive inappropriate messages on their phones.
- Overall attendance has risen to above the national average.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Recent improvements made to teaching are not firmly embedded. Whole-school training has identified the

key features that every lesson should have. This includes learning outcomes matched to the different abilities of students. Students say that when this is done well, it helps them to achieve because they pick the harder learning outcome to do, but often tasks set are too easy for them. Tasks are also set at a lower level to enable less able students to make improved progress.

- When asked, students can explain each stage of the procedures to manage behaviour in lessons. Not all teachers use these procedures, however, preferring to repeat warnings or ignore poor behaviour. This leads to minor disruption, particularly in lower ability classes, and undermines what most other staff are trying to establish.
- Improved marking and feedback is evident in students' books. Teachers give students time in lessons to read and respond to the comments made. However, this is not improving the quality of all students' presentation or ensuring that they complete all work. Scrutinising books in lessons revealed that some students are not encouraged to take enough pride in their work.
- Assessment data is used more effectively to set targets for improvement. In both key stages, students know their target grades and current assessment data suggests that most of them are making expected progress. However, close scrutiny of the quality and quantity of students' work shows that the expectations of some teachers are too low and that, currently, not all students are making good progress over time.
- Most teachers are well organised. They and their teaching assistants forge good relations with students and engage them in questioning and class discussion. They use the techniques learnt in whole-school training to check students' understanding by asking them to stand up or show their planners, and by asking them to mark their partners' work. They encourage students to work together and use a range of resources to find things out for themselves. This practice is not embedded across all subjects.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The majority of students studying core and additional science do not achieve well enough. Standards are low due to some ineffective teaching and a lack of rigor in monitoring students' progress. Students studying three sciences in Key Stage 4 achieve well. Attainment is low in design technology and French, both of which were identified as requiring improvement in the last inspection, and in music and religious education.
- A larger proportion of students that are disabled or have special educational needs made expected progress in English and mathematics this year. New arrangements are in place to provide further support for them, including a 'pupil passport' that is shared with their teachers so they know what type of support they need.
- A higher proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium made or exceeded expected progress in English and in mathematics compared with last year, but far fewer of them attained five GCSE A* to C grades including English and mathematics. In 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged students lagged behind that of others. Their attainment in English was, on average in line with pupils nationally and around half a grade below that of their classmates. In mathematics, the attainment of disadvantaged students was, on average, around half a grade behind pupils nationally and a grade below that of their classmates. This gap in performance is not closing fast enough. The overall achievement of some of these students, and those that are disabled or have special educational needs is compromised further by their regular absence from school.
- The school's arrangements to educate a small minority of students off-site last year did not ensure that all of them were suitably prepared for the next stage of their training or employment. Senior leaders did not monitor closely how well they were progressing at their different placements, and most of them underachieved. Of the 25 students in Year 11 taught off site, only 14 of them attained basic Level 1 awards in English and mathematics. Six of them left school without any GCSE qualifications.
- Prior attainment data from Key Stage 2 is used to organise students in Year 7 into groups of similar ability.

'Catch-up' funding is used to provide a small group of students with additional resources to accelerate their reading skills and provide additional support in mathematics. This year, two thirds of these students attained the expected level in mathematics by the end of the year but less than half did so in English. A small group of vulnerable students in Year 7 receive good-quality support and nurturing to help them settle into school and develop their literacy, numeracy and handwriting skills.

- Overall results improved significantly this year. A much larger proportion of students in Year 11 made expected progress in English and in mathematics, and a larger proportion of them exceeded national expectations. The percentage of students attaining at least five A* to C grades including English and mathematics rose to above average. Over 70% of students attained at least a C grade in English and 74% did so in mathematics. Results in vocational awards in business and in information, communication technology and media are very high. Two thirds of Year 11 students sat the GCSE English examination early in 2013 and most attained at least a grade C. This procedure was not continued this year.
- A larger proportion of the most-able students attained higher A* and A grades this year. However, observations by inspectors confirmed that currently, some more-able and most-able students are not being fully stretched in lessons because not all teachers have high expectations of them. When asked, some students feel that they need to be pushed harder. Lesson observations also confirmed that not all teachers provide sufficiently challenging tasks that stimulate students' interest, and motivates and inspires them to work hard for sustained periods of time.
- Current data indicates that most students in all years are making improved progress. Improvements to teaching and assessment are beginning to make a significant impact in most subjects. A renewed focus on improving students' literacy in Key Stage 3 and developing a culture of regular reading is beginning to lead to some improvement. In Years 7 and 8, discrete literacy lessons are helping students to improve their vocabulary and use of grammar. Procedures to improve literacy through the marking of their work – in particular, correcting spelling and grammar – are less effective because not all teachers do this consistently.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- Actions to raise achievement have had less impact in the sixth form than in the main school. Senior leaders acknowledge that, prior to this year, not all students received the information and guidance they needed to ensure that they studied courses in which they would achieve well. Too many started A-level courses in Year 12 without sufficient prior knowledge and understanding, and so did not continue their studies in Year 13. New guidance has been introduced this year to improve this.
- Overall pass rates in A-level courses were similar to last year's but the percentage of students attaining higher grades declined. Attainment in vocational courses is high. All students secured a place at their chosen college or university.
- This year, students have been given better quality advice about suitable courses for them. Students wishing to study A-level courses must have attained high GCSE grades. Current assessment data indicates that most students are making improved progress. Expectations of them are higher. Their attendance is routinely monitored and study periods in the resource centre are supervised.
- Common features of lessons developed in the main school are beginning to be used in sixth form lessons. Students are encouraged to apply a range of skills to analyse and improve the quality of their own and others' work. Data is being used to track their progress and inform staff of where additional support is needed. Teachers provide students with regular feedback to help them improve. Students are expected to take pride in their work and show positive attitudes towards learning. Staffing changes have been made to improve teaching in some sciences and law.
- Students behave well and know how to keep themselves and each other safe.

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	447054

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	1089
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Don Morris
Select	Daniel Gee
Date of previous school inspection	28 January 2014
Telephone number	01268 471201
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