

# The Bromfords School and Sixth Form College

Grange Avenue, Wickford SS12 0LZ

|  |                      |
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| <b>Inspection dates</b>                      | 24–25 May 2016       |
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>                 | <b>Good</b>          |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   | Good                 |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good                 |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare  | Good                 |
| Outcomes for pupils                          | Good                 |
| 16 to 19 study programmes                    | Require improvement  |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Requires improvement |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Over the last two years, the vision of the headteacher has transformed the school. Staff, pupils, learners and parents are optimistic about the school and progress is now above average.
- The culture of the school is one where relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils are highly productive. Pupils are polite and very well mannered. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school.
- Leaders have demonstrated an ability to get things done, for example through providing good-quality training for teachers, ensuring positive behaviour and establishing thorough quality assurance in all aspects of the school. The highly positive impact of governance is to be found in the school's recent improvement and the effectiveness of key appointments.
- Parents, staff and pupils are all extremely positive about all aspects of the school.
- The progress of pupils over time is good due to the challenge and support from teachers and leaders outside of lessons which builds on work in lessons. There is carefully targeted support for pupils to help them improve, whether they be gifted and talented or have special educational needs or disability.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is excellent and as a result they make particularly strong progress.
- Pupils are prepared well for making choices about their next steps, whether university, apprenticeships or direct entry to work. The use of external accreditation provides a level of structure and progression to pupils' enterprise and employability experience.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The sixth form requires improvement. Improvements in the sixth form started later than those in the main school and despite the current leadership being a beacon of transformative change, the changes have not yet had sufficient time to have a full impact.
- In too many lessons teachers do not push the pupils hard enough and pupils are not given enough opportunities to think deeply and explore ideas at a high level.
- The quality of marking, although improving, is inconsistent.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the quality of education in the sixth form to ensure that achievement is more consistent across subjects, with learners' progress matching that found in the best subjects by ensuring that:
  - learners are consistently challenged in lessons
  - sixth form staff and learners gain a sharper understanding of progress information.
  
- Ensure that pupils and learners of all abilities make even more progress by:
  - setting work that always challenges pupils and moves their learning forward quickly
  - using more questions that make pupils think deeply and explore one another's ideas.
  - building on the new marking and assessment policy to ensure that all teachers are not only following it with a consistent approach to marking, but that both teachers and pupils understand it, so that pupils' response to the marking leads to further improvements in their work.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The governors and headteacher have a vision for the school which middle leaders and staff share. There is a clear culture of hard work and good behaviour throughout the school. Governors and leaders have a firm understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development. For example, during joint observations with inspectors leaders were accurate in their analysis of lessons. School leaders are ambitious. They want the school to become outstanding and they are doing the right things to achieve this.
- Teaching has improved sharply because of effective leadership and management. There is rigorous performance management and planned professional development which is bringing about positive change. Teachers' progress up the salary scale is linked to their performance.
- Parents recognise the improvements in the school. There were only 30 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View, but they were all positive. Examples included: 'A huge improvement all round and I am extremely happy for my child to continue to grow and achieve there. Most importantly I feel listened to as a parent.'
- New and inexperienced staff are supported well. The school works with other local schools to learn from and share best practice. All new staff, however experienced, are mentored and supported through their first year at the school. Newly qualified teachers overwhelmingly value the support and training they receive at the school.
- Senior leaders have dedicated much time and thought to developing effective systems to track progress and improve teaching. Senior leaders check teaching and the work of subject leaders. The school has changed its management structure so that senior leaders are helping other leaders to bring about improvement. Although middle leaders all subscribe to the headteacher's vision for the school, until recently there was some inconsistency among middle leaders. Senior leaders have worked hard to address this. Inspectors met middle leaders who are ambitious for the school. They all agreed with a middle leader who said: 'We all know what we are doing, where we are going and how to make it happen.'
- In the school community, staff and pupils have created a model of British values. Pupils are aware of the importance of democracy. GCSE religious education is compulsory for all pupils and ensures all gain an understanding of different beliefs. However, the promotion of respect and tolerance goes much deeper into school life. Pupils are given opportunities to explore their spiritual, moral, social and cultural abilities through a range of activities such as sport, music and drama. Leaders have rightly identified the need to develop music further and developments are underway.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. A wide range of GCSEs are offered with a choice of GCE A level and BTEC courses in the sixth form. At key stage 4 and in the sixth form additional qualifications, such as the ASDAN CoPE course or the Employability for Life Charter Plus certification, bring a level of coherence to the provision. However, there is nothing currently in place to ensure all pupils and learners have equal access to the accreditation of employability skills and work experience. Personal, social, health and economic (PHSE) education is covered appropriately in Years 7 to 9. The tutorial programme and 'curriculum enrichment days' build on this in Years 10 to 13. Humanities provide popular options, and modern foreign languages is building in popularity from a low base. As a result, the proportion of pupils achieving the EBacc (the group of subjects favoured by the government) is increasing, but is still low.
- Resources are deployed very well to give pupils equal opportunities to succeed. School leaders make effective use of the pupil premium funding to improve the progress of pupils entitled to additional support. Leaders are aware that while the progress of disadvantaged pupils has improved, the gap between their progress and that of other pupils is not closing quickly enough and have rightly identified this as a priority. There is a good analysis of the impact of this funding publicly available on the school's website.
- The school seeks and acts upon external support. It recently took part in a 'peer assessment and support' exercise known as 'Essex triads'. This involved leaders openly and honestly sharing information on the school and being visited by headteachers and senior leaders from two other Essex schools. The school's relationship with the local authority is strong and productive. The school benefits from the support and challenge of the local authority's standards and excellence commissioner and other staff. In turn the local authority directs other school leaders to learn from the effective examples of change management at Bromfords, including in the sixth form.

## ■ The governance of the school

- The governing body provides a shared vision and high level of challenge to senior leaders. Governors' and leaders' ambitions for the school are equally high.
  - The expertise of governors has been strengthened since previous inspections. It includes former successful headteachers and managers from business as well as community leaders. They combine their experience and skills well to make up a highly effective body.
  - The governing body reviews all policies regularly. It ensures that policies are up to date, comprehensive, well-informed and accessible to all stakeholders through the highly informative website.
  - Governors scrutinise the arrangements for the management of teachers' performance diligently, including challenging decisions of senior leaders regarding pay progression.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a highly effective focus on keeping pupils safe. Leaders and governors ensure that procedures, policies and recruitment arrangements are fully compliant with legislation and that staff are well trained in understanding their responsibilities. For example, one parent told inspectors, 'I have in the past had dealings with the pastoral staff and can say that they and the safeguarding leaders are outstanding at what they do.'

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the previous inspection and has also improved greatly over time. This is the result of the leadership implementing systems and processes that are both robust and supportive. The monitoring calendar ensures all aspects of teachers' work are reviewed regularly.
- Leaders take swift action to challenge underperformance and support teachers with a well-trained team of coaches. Lead practitioners have incisive lesson observation skills and feedback to staff is communicated effectively to help them improve. Parents are pleased with the quality of teaching. A typical response to inspectors was: 'I believe the school has made good progress since the new headteacher joined the school with notable improvements in the quality of teaching, marking and behaviour. Weaknesses in teaching standards appear to be dealt with quickly and decisively.'
- Poor teaching has been eliminated, but governors and leaders recognise the need for more teaching to be inspiring to pupils in key stages 3 and 4 and to learners in the sixth form.
- Planning for learning identifies different groups of pupils such as those entitled to pupil premium funding or those who have special educational needs or disability.
- In response to the school's identification of some relative underperformance by higher-attaining pupils, a lead practitioner focused on their progress across the main school and sixth form. This is leading to an increased focus by teachers on raising the achievement of higher-attaining pupils. Leaders recognise the need to ensure that these pupils are suitably challenged across all their lessons, as this is not yet universal.
- Teachers plan interesting lessons which pupils enjoy and so instances of low-level disruption are very rare. Staff have high expectations of pupils' application to tasks and, in return, pupils work with positive attitudes.
- There is clear monitoring of any underachievement and a system of middle leader meetings, pupils' reports and extra-curricular interventions supports pupils to catch up.
- Literacy lessons support the improvement of pupils' reading ability effectively. Monitoring information confirms this and shows accelerated progress in pupils' reading. The school's focus on literacy gives pupils a better chance to do well across a range of subjects.
- Overall, teaching and assessment has a positive impact on the progress of pupils. Much of this results from the excellent support and additional time that staff give to pupils out of timetabled lessons.
- Sometimes pupils need this extra support because the planning for the needs of different groups of pupils does not become the reality when the lesson takes place. Some teachers do not adapt their explanations, their questioning and the work set to provide appropriate challenge to pupils of different ability levels. This is particularly the case for high-attaining pupils (HAPs).
- The new marking and feedback policy is being applied by the majority of teachers. Teachers apply the policy, but its impact is reduced because pupils do not always understand what they need to do to improve.
- The presentation of pupils' work is usually good and demonstrates pupils' pride in their work.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare **is good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The personal qualities that pupils develop make a significant contribution to their good progress and social achievement.
- Pupils understand how to stay safe at school and beyond. They understand and have great confidence in the school's ability to prevent different forms of bullying, discrimination or extremism. Any concerns are followed up thoroughly. Representative of parental comments was: 'I have two children at the school who are doing really well; they get fantastic support.' Pupils' understanding of staying safe includes e-safety.
- Pupils understand how to adopt healthy lifestyles. This understanding is developed through subjects such as food technology and physical education.
- There are effective transition arrangements from primary schools, allowing Year 7 pupils to make a good start. This is particularly effective in promoting the progress of pupils who have special educational needs or disability.
- The needs of the small number of pupils who are in the care of the local authority are taken very seriously and met well. A local authority review in May 2016 shows that they are making good progress. Plans demonstrate how pupil premium money is targeted to support them. Links with the head of the Essex Virtual School are effective.
- The school organises a range of activities to promote pupils' understanding of careers and alternative post-16 courses, including involvement in pilot projects to promote apprenticeships. In Years 10 to 13 every pupil and learner is supported with an impartial one-to-one guidance interview. The school works in partnership with outside agencies, business partners and Southend Connexions Service to provide a range of events and activities to advise pupils and learners on their post-16 and post-18 options. The school employs a 'student engagement coordinator' to provide independent careers advice. Provision is effective in ensuring that pupils move on to appropriate further or higher education, employment or training.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school is seen by their above-average attendance and their punctuality to lessons. The school has identified and worked hard and successfully to improve the attendance of a small group of poor attenders. Systems to improve attendance are robust. For example, the school employs an attendance officer.
- Some pupils, particularly those with below-average attainment, lack confidence in lessons. They are very reliant on being directed by teachers. They quickly do what they are told and work diligently once directed, but can lack initiative.
- Pupils have many opportunities for their personal development through activities and trips. The school monitors the uptake by groups, but does not sufficiently monitor the experience of individual pupils, so cannot fully assure itself that all pupils benefit enough.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Behaviour is good in lessons. As a result, inspectors rarely observed staff needing to apply the behaviour policy. Over the last three years there has been a marked reduction in low-level disruption so that it is now very rare. Senior leaders are appropriately visible in corridors during lesson times. They are a reassuring presence at lunch and breaktimes, but again pupils get on really well during breaks and the staff presence is unobtrusive.
- Exclusions have reduced and there have been no permanent exclusions recently.

## Outcomes for pupils **are good**

- Pupil progress in the main school has improved over recent years. Pupils' attainment is broadly average. In 2016, there was a slight fall in the headline proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE passes at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics, but given pupils' starting points this represented improved progress. This is evidenced by historical published examinations data, the school's own performance information for current pupils, and their work in lessons, books and folders.
- All year groups now join the school with below-average attainment in English and mathematics from key stage 2. Overall the progress made by pupils in their best eight subjects has improved over the last three

years and is now above average. Most pupils make broadly expected progress in English, but until recently the most able have not made as much progress in English as would be expected. The school has identified this as a key issue and targeted additional resources to provide more challenge and improve the outcomes of the most able pupils.

- Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds have made increasingly better progress since the previous inspection. The school's information on their current progress shows them continuing to improve, but despite well-targeted support the improvement in their progress is not accelerating fast enough to completely close the gap between their achievement and that of their peers.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress and do very well at the school. The provision made for them supports their learning highly effectively due to excellent leadership of this aspect of the school's work. The pastoral care for these pupils is particularly effective and the school is proud that learners with special educational needs have made sufficient progress in the school to gain places at university. Inspectors received highly positive comments about the provision for pupils who have special needs. For example, 'My middle child has dyslexic traits but I have found her English, in particular spelling, has improved massively whilst at Bromfords.'
- Pupils now receive effective guidance towards appropriate next steps that lead to them embarking on appropriate courses enabling them to continue to make good progress.
- The school has recognised that many pupils arrive at school with weak literacy skills and this is a barrier to learning. All pupils in Years 7 and 8 have specific literacy lessons and the 'accelerated reader' programme is successfully boosting their reading ability.

### 16 to 19 study programmes

### require improvement

- Progress is improving sharply, but has been inadequate in recent years. Historic data shows outcomes for learners on vocational courses to be very strong, but below average for the majority of courses which are academic A levels. The progress of current learners suggests that Year 13 results may indicate better progress this year, but this is improvement from a low base and may remain below average. Year 12 learners are benefiting from their whole 16–19 programme being under the improved arrangements and so are doing well, but their final assessments are still to come in a year's time. Leaders have raised the entrance requirements for some courses to ensure that learners have the necessary ability to do well. Once learners have chosen to join the sixth form they tend to stay, so retention rates are strong.
- Leaders are providing 16–19 study programmes that have improved significantly and now meet most of the requirements well. For example, the small number of learners who have not yet achieved at least a C grade in GCSE English and mathematics make progress. Preparation for learners' next steps is good and all current Year 13 learners have a realistic destination plan for work, training or university
- Preparation for sixth form study skills is very good and took place in autumn term lessons. As a result of these lessons, learners were seen to be hard working and focused in subject lessons and in private study periods.
- The delivery of preparation for careers and work experience requires further development as it is not yet evident in learners' study programmes. Leaders confirmed that this is an area that is being developed. Year 12 learners said that they would like guidance and support in their knowledge and understanding of the UK labour market. Learners collate their current evidence for employment during tutorial sessions. They present this as a portfolio for their Employability for Life Charter Plus certification in the spring term. Learners are very well supported by staff and by their peers. They see this as a significant strength in their sixth form. Positive relationships with teachers and among learners were observed both in and out of lessons.
- Sixth form leadership is now having a highly positive impact. The school has established links with other schools that provide outstanding education. Staff use these links well to validate coursework and marking criteria. Several teachers have experience as examination board markers and they use their expertise well to support learners. However, these new systems are as yet untested in terms of the impact they have on the accuracy of staff predictions and outcomes for learners. There are now high expectations for the 16–19 learners and they are responding well to these. Leaders have also set high expectations in their policies and procedures for attendance and independent study habits. The sixth form study area is large and well set out with sufficient computers, and provides well for quiet study and group work. Teachers provide additional work and reading lists so that learners can successfully continue study out of lessons. Learners who do not attend are contacted promptly. Attendance is now good.

## School details

|                                |          |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 139181   |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Essex    |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 10017763 |

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

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|--|---|
| <b>Type of school</b>  | Secondary   |
| <b>School category</b>                                       | Academy converter   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                                   | 11–18   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                                      | Mixed   |
| <b>Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes</b>         | Mixed   |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>                   | 1,038   |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes</b> | 153   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>                                 | The governing body  |
| <b>Chair</b>   | Don Morris  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>   | Daniel Gee  |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                                      | 01268 471 201   |
| <b>Website</b>   | <a href="http://www.bromfords.essex.sch.uk">http://www.bromfords.essex.sch.uk</a> |
| <b>Email address</b>   | <a href="mailto:office@bromfords.essex.sch.uk">office@bromfords.essex.sch.uk</a>  |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>                           | 19 November 2014  |

## Information about this school

- This is a larger than average secondary school.
- Most pupils and learners are White British. The proportion of pupils and learners from minority ethnic backgrounds is low.
- Around 15% of the pupils have special educational needs or disability. This is a little above the national average.
- At around a quarter, the proportion of pupils that are disadvantaged and eligible for the pupil premium (government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) is a little below average.
- Alternative arrangements are made to educate a small minority of pupils off the school site, at Prospects College, South Essex College, Essex Youth Services (HUB), Rally Sports, Motorvation and Circles Farm.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 33 lessons, eight of which were seen jointly with a senior leader. In addition several short visits were made to a range of lessons. At the time of the inspection pupils in Year 11 and learners in Years 12 and 13 were involved in public examinations. Visits were made to the revision lessons for these year groups, but it was not possible to observe the full range of teaching.
- Meetings were held with senior, subject and other leaders, two groups of pupils and a group of sixth form learners, the chair and three members of the governing body, the school improvement partner and two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at the 30 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspection team observed the school's work, scrutinised data about pupils' and learners' 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 pupils' and learners' work in lessons.

## Inspection team

|                              |                         |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Adrian Lyons, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Georgina Atkinson            | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Jane Ladner                  | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Simon Webb                   | Her Majesty's Inspector |

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