

Brighton Aldridge Community Academy

Lewes Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 9PW

Inspection dates

30 November–1 December 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
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	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal, fully supported by governors and staff, has overseen many improvements in the last two years. He continues to develop the school's work wisely and thoughtfully.
- Senior leaders are competent and efficient. Together with the principal, they identify areas for development and tackle them energetically.
- The vast majority of pupils and students enjoy school life and the rich extra-curricular activities on offer. Their behaviour is considerate and they work hard and learn well.
- The governing body is proud of the recent improvements. Members continue to ask searching questions and to visit the school regularly so they can be sure that the culture of ambition is maintained.
- The care, guidance and support for pupils' well-being and safety are outstanding. Vulnerable pupils are nurtured and receive sensible and constructive advice.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is of a high standard. Pupils' learning and personal needs are addressed sensitively in the main school and the Swan Centre.
- Disadvantaged pupils now make similar or better progress than non-disadvantaged pupils nationally in English, mathematics and several other subjects.
- Teaching is skilful and planned well. Assessment is increasingly sharp. The most able pupils respond well to the challenging teaching they receive.
- Numbers are increasing in the sixth form. Sports, digital media and other specialist 'academies' provide students with excellent routes into further study or employment.
- Results in most work-related, sixth-form subjects are very strong with a high proportion of double distinctions. Outcomes in academic and a few work-related courses are lower.
- Pupils' notes are not always helpful for reference and revision. This is because some pupils do not present their work neatly or legibly.
- Middle leadership of humanities and modern foreign languages, as well as the progress pupils make, are not as strong as in the majority of other subjects.
- Despite the school's determined work to reduce absence, attendance is not good. Since September 2016, expectations for even better behaviour have led to a rise in exclusions.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To raise achievement:
 - monitor the leadership and management of geography, history and modern foreign languages to make sure that pupils' enjoyment, quality of learning and progress in these subjects improve
 - focus on improving the value added in the sixth form in the small number of academic subjects and also in a few of the work-related qualifications
 - extend, by sharing widely, the very strong and effective teaching practice that already exists within the school
 - impress on pupils the importance of presenting their work legibly and setting it out clearly.
- To improve attendance:
 - persevere with the sharp monitoring of attendance patterns and intensify the implementation of the actions introduced in September 2016
 - reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal has successfully tackled all the aspects of the school's work which required improvement in the previous inspection. He continues to be well supported by the efficient and effective vice-principal and other senior leaders.
- New leadership of subjects such as mathematics has generated better progress in all year groups and improved GCSE results. The school's intense focus on the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils in the last few years has led to rapid improvements in these pupils' learning. Teaching has improved because staff experience high-quality training for their professional development. One subject leader described 'having no fears about taking and sharing creative risks'.
- Over 90% of staff who responded to the questionnaire are proud to work at the school and it is clear from talking to them that morale is high. Leaders and governors work very well together to create a culture that combines enjoyment of school life with support and challenge for staff and pupils alike.
- Many middle leaders are very effective. Overall leadership has the potential to be outstanding when all middle leaders, particularly within humanities and modern foreign languages, have overcome the weaknesses of the past. They are well supported by senior leaders, who assess the quality of teaching and learning accurately.
- All members of the school community are encouraged to have high aspirations. Teachers are supported to attend subject training and to liaise with other schools. Sharing of excellent practice is growing and has the potential to expand. The science leader refers to using techniques for learning poetry in helping pupils to learn equations!
- Leaders have counteracted barriers to disadvantaged pupils' educational achievement by identifying accurately the most effective interventions to employ. These include:
 - all Year 7 pupils attending a three-day team camp
 - holiday and after-school intensive revision sessions
 - professional, high-quality pastoral support, for example to raise pupils' self-esteem or support their individual needs.
- In several subjects, by 2016, these initiatives resulted in disadvantaged pupils making far better progress than in the past. Catch-up funds have also been spent thoughtfully so that younger pupils' reading and numeracy skills develop quickly.
- In the past, very few pupils studied a humanities subject or a modern foreign language beyond Year 8. The principal made the right changes so that far more Year 11 pupils study these subjects in key stage 4. A high percentage of pupils are taking double or triple GCSEs in science; triple science was not offered before. Years 7 and 8 now study resistant materials and food studies, with food technology now offered at GCSE.

- Asked to describe the school, Year 11 pupils came up with unusual observations including, 'different in a good way', 'elegant' and 'futuristic'. The latter possibly reflects the governors' and staff's determination to focus on skills for pupils' future lives and post-16 plans, seen in the wide range of work-related courses on offer.
- These courses, such as travel and tourism or catering, enrich pupils' learning. They suit a few pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who struggle with a full academic programme or who prefer more practical learning.
- Preparing food for the elderly in a local community pub develops pupils' work skills as well as their empathy for others. Several members of staff rightly refer to the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as 'underpinning everything'. Form time is used well to study different faiths, beliefs and lifestyles and an increasing number of teachers link work to real-life situations. Trips to parts of the UK or visits to the theatre expand pupils' cultural experiences.
- At the same time, leaders make sure that pupils are aware of what constitutes British values, through assemblies, form times and a range of subjects. History lessons strengthen understanding of terms such as 'democracy'. Most pupils met during the inspection had a grasp of what extremism means, but were less secure on the meaning of radicalisation.
- With superb facilities, all pupils benefit and enjoy the wide range of sports included in the extra-curricular provision. In addition, there are many music groups and clubs which broaden pupils' horizons. Year 9 pupils particularly enjoy the film media club.

Governance of the school

- Governors are fully involved in school life. Leaders welcome governors' school visits when they check things for themselves, talk to pupils and explore the background to any issues. Governors bring much high-level expertise and experience to their meetings. They challenge leaders about the success of actions they take or reasons for ones they propose. They monitor finances meticulously, probe the justification for pay increases and make sure that additional government funds are spent wisely.
- Most of the governors are representatives of the Aldridge Foundation. All of them are dedicated to the school's growth and delighted that the sixth form is increasingly popular. It will expand considerably when the British and Irish Modern Music Institute moves to the school site to benefit from the outstanding facilities. Over 100 students will arrive in September 2017 and a similar number in 2018.

Safeguarding

- Arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Policies are followed with attention to detail and all staff know that they are responsible for every pupil's safety. Regular training means that teachers and all support staff are up to date with changes to government legislation and requirements, for example in the 'Prevent' duty or when it is correct to inform the police about concerns. Child protection issues are followed up immediately.

- Governors and school leaders work hard to involve parents in school life, and to contribute to, and have links with, the local community. Much work with parents is related to pupils' safety with helpful information on the website on e-safety, for example, and contact lists should they need support. Strong links are made with those caring for children who are looked after or parents of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, to focus on pupils' attendance, health and well-being.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Respectful relationships between pupils, and between teachers and pupils, underpin at least good progress in the majority of subjects. Pupils' interest is stimulated by interesting video clips or objectives: 'the journey of a cheese sandwich' in science or making a contemporary robot in art and design.
- It is no longer the case that teachers set work at the same level for all pupils regardless of their ability, or do not adjust lessons if pupils are confused. Lessons are planned so that all pupils can tackle what they are asked to do from their own starting points, and their understanding is checked regularly.
- Pupils' books confirm that teachers apply the school's marking policy consistently by giving pupils suggestions about how to improve their work. Pupils respond well to these written or verbal HTI (how to improve it) comments and learn from them; advice for Year 10 dance pupils was to 'disguise your mistakes!' Pupils' books also reveal, however, that some of them do not take care over the presentation of their work. Pupils cannot reflect on where their problem solving went wrong if calculations are set out haphazardly, or which sentences contained the best vocabulary if their writing is hard to read.
- Improved teaching in mathematics and intensive interventions to strengthen some pupils' basic numeracy skills help pupils make far better progress than in the past. Teachers and learning support assistants, described by a Year 7 pupil as 'very helpful', pose questions which make pupils think hard and justify their responses.
- Teachers extend pupils' vocabulary by stressing the importance of subject-specific vocabulary, explaining 'Punnet squares' and 'aperture' in science or insisting that pupils spell words correctly. Some pupils benefit from therapeutic writing sessions, producing creative writing of a high standard in a calm environment. In May 2016, the National Literacy Trust described the school as having 'a word-rich culture'.
- Many pupils feel that they make excellent progress in English, mathematics and science because 'we are challenged'. The most able pupils and most able disadvantaged pupils describe 'being nagged for harder work', tackling 'hard papers' and visiting Oxford for a debate. Regardless of age, most of these pupils met during the inspection had ambitious thoughts about their post-16 plans. The science department displays demanding questions under the headings of 'brave' and 'even braver'.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities learn well with support from the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator, the head of the Swan Centre and the learning support assistants. A pupil said that they all 'help you a lot with education'. Other pupils mentioned the useful one-to-one help they get with mathematics and writing subjects.
- The excellent progress generated by high-quality learning is not yet evident in all classes. Middle leaders and skilful teachers share their expertise. This is not yet focused on the few subjects such as the humanities and modern foreign languages where pupils need to make rapid progress to overcome weaker teaching in the past.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. All safeguarding and risk assessment procedures are followed carefully and thoroughly. The medical room is of a very high standard.
- Form time is used productively, whether problem solving, reading or considering social issues such as prejudice and discrimination. Separate lessons in personal, social and health education focus on sex and relationships education, drugs, or, as one pupil commented, 'things that are useful in life'.
- A police youth engagement officer visits weekly and speaks to pupils about issues such as sexting. Staff know which pupils are young carers and keep a careful, supportive eye on them. They also know the children who are looked after and who are equally well guided by the virtual school head, responsible for promoting their educational achievement.
- Careers education starts in Year 7 and its success can be seen in the Year 11 destination figures, with only one pupil not in education or training in 2016. A third of the pupils stayed on into the Brighton Aldridge Community Academy (BACA) College.
- Pupils based in the Swan Centre and others who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are particularly secure and well supported. Specialist support assistants and a range of experts, in speech and language therapy or counselling for example, work closely together. They address pupils' medical, learning or personal health issues sensitively so they can learn well. The development of pupils' social skills and confidence has a high priority. The Beacon room provides pupils with a space where, if needed, they can be calm and reflect before starting or returning to their lessons.
- The school welcomes and liaises with any external organisation or group that can help pupils' healthcare or behavioural needs. These range from child and adolescent mental health services, to higher level teaching assistants organising cookery or forest clubs. A community partner leads bicycle training and maintenance sessions for small groups of pupils.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They concentrate very well in lessons and settle down to work willingly. Pupils often apply themselves enthusiastically and creatively, not just in cheerleading in Year 8 or rock school in Year 10! They work together supportively. A Year 7 'talented mentor' supported a pupil needing help in design technology and pupils showed resilience practising French conversations in pairs.
- Since September 2016, the school has employed a full-time education welfare officer and an attendance officer. This extends the tireless work to reduce the proportion of persistent absentees. The officers liaise with families, primary schools and the local authority to tackle issues as early as possible.
- Staff make changes and adapt their responses to identified patterns when attendance drops. These include planning activities to counteract absence in the week before the Christmas holiday. As a last resort, the school issues fixed-penalty notices. Disadvantaged pupils and girls do not attend as well as other pupils.
- During the inspection, reasons for individual pupils' persistent absence were explored in detail. They include friendship issues, difficult home circumstances and anxiety and stress. Leaders and pastoral staff do everything possible to resolve these problems. Dramatic improvement is evident in some cases but attendance still needs to improve.
- At the beginning of the present term, the school relaunched tighter behaviour expectations (reflecting a local authority focus). These have worked but they initially generated an upward spike in fixed-term exclusions. They have since dropped but not yet to the below-average figures of the past.
- Bullying, racist and homophobic incidents are rare but tackled fast and firmly, sometimes with support from a police youth engagement officer. Pupils can describe assemblies they receive on these sensitive topics.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In Years 7 to 11, all pupils continue to make extremely good progress in English, as they have done for several years. Progress in mathematics, having been far less successful in the past, exceeded that seen in English in 2016, so the percentage of pupils attaining grades A*–C in both these subjects went up. In science, the small number of pupils taking GCSE, particularly the most able and including the most able disadvantaged, also achieved strong outcomes, as did all pupils who took a BTEC qualification.
- Progress has been far weaker in the humanities and modern foreign languages. New staff are already generating good progress, though there is much catching up to be done. Several other subjects are also seeing improving rates of progress, but middle- and low-attaining but pupils have found computer science difficult. Alternative courses have been introduced which pupils, boys particularly, are enjoying.
- The reading programmes and staff time funded by the catch-up premium are very effective in improving pupils' fluency, comprehension and expression. Several Year 7 pupils have made rapid progress in their reading and/or numeracy in their first term.

- With wise spending of pupil premium funds, many disadvantaged pupils make progress in English which exceeds that made by non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. In mathematics, low-, middle- and high attainers all exceeded the progress made by others nationally. The school's next challenge is to bring middle-attaining pupils' overall achievement up to the level reached by low- and high attainers.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in English and several other subjects. The small number of Year 11 children who are looked after all did well in their GCSEs in 2016. As seen nationally, girls tend to make better progress than boys. Leaders are imaginative in finding ways to motivate boys who are unenthusiastic about learning in the classroom; a community partner leads bicycle training and maintenance sessions for them.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The sixth form is very well led and managed. Staff are directed efficiently to develop imaginative programmes of study which lead students on to higher education and/or to employment. The majority of subjects on offer are taught effectively.
- Outcomes in the very few academic qualifications, taken by a small number of students, have not been as good as those in the increasingly successful and popular work-related ones. Numerous partnerships with local industries and companies contribute a great deal to this success.
- Governors and leaders are acutely aware of the cost of running academic courses with small numbers. English literature will continue with the addition of photography, which several Year 11 pupils are keen to study.
- The digital media academy is particularly successful with enthusiastic and skilful teaching. It won the Business Education Award for Partnerships in July 2016 after taking part in a 'digital day' (a national initiative run by the British Interactive Media Association). One company commented on its blog, 'What immediately struck us was the enthusiasm that the group had for the industry and more specifically the uninhibited ideas that immediately began to surface'.
- The recently opened, state-of-the-art Sir Rod Aldridge Cricket Centre, along with the football academy, give students access to outstanding training facilities and high-quality teaching. These complement the sports qualifications in which students learn about the related employment opportunities.
- The well-taught construction course includes all the required skills, health and safety procedures and the mathematics needed in this industry. In an imaginative recent exercise, Year 12 students taught basic construction skills to some Year 7 pupils.
- The science department plans to develop its range of successful industry-related courses, for example bio-medical studies and forensics. The skilful, subtle suggestions and prompts for teams of students working towards the level 3 BTEC qualification in entrepreneurship sparks students' ideas and creativity. Links with the NHS will generate apprenticeships for those taking the BTEC qualification in health and social care.

- The proportion of students who successfully re-took GCSEs in English and/or mathematics in 2015 was above average in 2015 but dropped back in mathematics in 2016. A new online mathematics program which assesses students' starting points and prepares worksheets for their weaknesses is showing signs of working well.
- Attendance has improved, particularly in Year 13, and is above average so far this year. Students receive the same high-quality personal support and careers advice as in the main school. A student described support for university applications as 'outstanding'. An increasing number proceed to university. Retention rates are good for students taking two-year courses. For others, an improving, slightly below-average proportion of students proceed to education, employment or training at the end of Year 12.
- Students enjoy sixth-form life and are well prepared for their futures. Discussing British values with them, they mentioned democracy, law and becoming a member of Parliament, suggesting that they are well prepared for their futures. They also learn about health screening and consider issues such as driving safety and social media.

School details

Unique reference number	136164
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10019904

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	686
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Kyle
Principal	Dylan Davies
Telephone number	01273 691191
Website	www.baca-uk.org.uk
Email address	office@baca-uk.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 December 2014

Information about this school

- The academy is sponsored by the Aldridge Foundation, an educational charity founded by Sir Rod Aldridge OBE in 2006. The foundation, principally through the sponsorship of entrepreneurial schools and colleges, helps young people reach their potential and improve their communities.
- The foundation sponsors eight entrepreneurial schools and academies in England and is also a lead partner in two university technical colleges. One of these, UTC@harbourside, is fairly close to the school in Newhaven, East Sussex. Aldridge Education also has a close relationship with ADA, the National College for Digital Skills.

- In early 2017, the academy will join Aldridge's new multi-academy trust, Aldridge Education. This will support even closer working with Portslade Aldridge Community Academy.
- The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school with a small sixth form known as BACA College.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is also well above average. The school has a specialist facility, the Swan Centre, for children who have speech and language disorders and children who have autism spectrum disorder. This facility is managed by the local authority.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is over 60%, well above the percentage seen nationally.
- Over 40 pupils in Year 7 are eligible for catch-up funding (for those who did not attain level 4 in English or mathematics at the end of primary school).
- In 2015, the school met the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Over eight out of 10 pupils are of White British backgrounds. A below-average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- Occasionally, but not at present, a few pupils attend alternative education off site, usually part time.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in over 40 part-lessons and form time sessions at the end of the day. Several of the lessons were joint observations with senior leaders. Inspectors looked at pupils' books in lessons and heard some pupils reading.
- Inspectors attended an assembly and tutor times. They met pupils and students informally as they visited parts of the school during breaktimes. They also held meetings with groups of pupils from several year groups and the sixth form: the most able; disadvantaged pupils; and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Discussions were held with staff, including senior and middle leaders. The lead inspector met with the sponsor's chief executive officer and education director, and with the chair of the governing body and five other governors.
- Inspectors took account of 53 responses to a questionnaire completed by staff and 11 written comments from parents. Only 17 parents responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and only 12 pupils completed an online questionnaire. The outcomes were taken into account but are not mentioned in the report.

Inspection team

Clare Gillies, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Suzanne Richards	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Bullen	Ofsted Inspector
Adam Mirams	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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