

Bramhall High School

Seal Road, Bramhall, Stockport, Cheshire SK7 2JT

Inspection dates

7–8 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Outcomes for pupils have improved since the last inspection. However, pupils do not make consistently good progress across different year groups and subjects.
- Differences between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally are not diminishing quickly enough in some subjects and year groups.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not make enough progress in key stage 4.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good across the school. At times, assessment is not used effectively to match work to pupils' needs. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve.
- Teachers sometimes miss out on chances to question the most able pupils enough to challenge them and deepen their understanding.
- Strategies introduced to improve pupils' literacy have not had enough impact in some subjects.
- Pupils' behaviour in some lessons and around the school requires improvement. Some pupils express concern about disruptions to their learning.
- Pupils' attendance is improving. However, the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils is still not high enough.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has set the school firmly on a road to recovery. Staff morale is high. Staff are committed to the headteacher's vision.
- Leaders' actions have led to some improvement in the quality of teaching and pupils' behaviour and progress.
- The headteacher has worked successfully to strengthen links with the community. This is reflected in the increased number of pupils applying for places in Year 7.
- The personal development and welfare of pupils are a high priority for leaders. Pupils feel safe and are well cared for.
- The school provides many opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Governance has improved since the last inspection. Governors provide effective challenge and support to leaders. They have a thorough knowledge of the strengths and areas that require further improvement in the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that different groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make at least good progress across subjects and year groups by:
 - ensuring that teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and give them work that challenges their thinking
 - making sure that staff use questioning effectively to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding
 - helping teachers to use assessment information more effectively to plan learning to meet the needs of pupils.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management further by ensuring that:
 - the remaining achievement gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally are diminished
 - strategies to improve pupils' literacy have more impact
 - teachers apply the school's behaviour policy consistently to eradicate disruption in and outside lessons
 - disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities attend school more regularly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has an ambitious vision for the school. Since taking up her post in April 2016, she has raised expectations and improved morale. The very large majority of staff who responded to the online survey said that they are proud to work in the school and think that the school has improved. Leaders and staff believe that the introduction of the 'Bramhall Way' has contributed to improvement across the school. The headteacher has been successful in engaging parents and building relationships with the community.
- The headteacher has galvanised her senior leadership team and there is greater accountability at all levels. Capacity to make further improvements is strong.
- Procedures for managing teachers' performance are robust. Teachers' targets are linked closely to the school's priorities and pupils' outcomes. The headteacher and governors have been prepared to take firm action when teachers do not meet the required standards.
- Subject leaders are held to account for the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils in their departments. They monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning through lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' work. However, the impact of this improving practice is not yet consistent across the school.
- Leaders know where strong practice exists in the school. Good and outstanding practitioners are used to develop the skills of others. Newly qualified teachers value the wide range of professional training and support that they receive.
- Leaders have identified the barriers to the rapid improvement in progress of disadvantaged pupils. The actions that they have taken to diminish the achievement gaps between these pupils and others nationally have had some success. Leaders know that more remains to be done in this area. They are beginning to evaluate the success of interventions for pupils with different starting points with greater precision.
- Leaders have now analysed the impact of the most recent Year 7 catch-up funding and have identified that work needs to be done so that more pupils make accelerated progress.
- Leaders have introduced a range of strategies to improve pupils' literacy across the curriculum but these have not had sufficient time to influence pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders have revised how they check on the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in order to make better use of the special educational needs funding. Some pupils supported by the funding, particularly in key stage 4, do not make good enough progress. The special educational needs coordinator is beginning to use information more sharply to evaluate the impact of support programmes on pupils' progress.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, with a strong focus on academic subjects. Leaders keep the curriculum under continuous review to ensure that it is meeting the needs of all pupils.
- A wide range of extra-curricular opportunities enhance the curriculum. These include

the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, drama productions, sport and visits to other countries.

- Opportunities for encouraging pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of British values are very carefully planned. Assemblies and 'skills for life' days include a range of topics such as rights and responsibilities, democracy and raising pupils' awareness of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.
- The local authority has provided effective support and guidance to the school, such as training for governors and support for the special educational needs coordinator, who is new to the role. This has improved these aspects of leadership in the school.
- Parents' views of the school are very positive. The overwhelming majority of those completing Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, would recommend the school to others. Additional comments received from parents reflected how much they valued the support that their children receive, particularly when they start school in Year 7.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a wide range of expertise and are very committed to the school. They hold school leaders to account effectively for pupils' progress. Governors are keen to improve their effectiveness. They have undertaken an audit of their skills and regularly attend training to hone their practice.
- Minutes of meetings show that they challenge and support the work of the headteacher and her team.
- The governing body ensures that the arrangements for the performance management of staff, including the headteacher, are robust.
- Governors meet all of their statutory duties related to safeguarding.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders follow procedures carefully and ensure that all pupils are kept safe. Staff appointed to the school are checked carefully in accordance with statutory requirements. Staff receive regular training to keep them updated on safeguarding matters, such as child sexual exploitation and radicalisation.
- Leaders liaise effectively and in a timely manner with parents and outside agencies to create a culture of safety.
- Pupils who spoke to inspectors say that they feel safe and know who to speak to if they have any concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because there is too much variability across different classes and year groups. As a result, not all pupils make good progress.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of their pupils. They do not plan

work that is matched accurately to individual pupils' learning needs. Furthermore, in a small number of lessons, teaching fails to engage pupils, which leads to low-level disruption and slows learning and progress.

- Some teachers do not question pupils well enough to encourage them to think deeply and develop their understanding.
- Over time, work provided for the most able pupils is not always challenging enough to make sure that they reach the highest grades of which they are capable, particularly the most able disadvantaged pupils.
- The strong relationships between staff and pupils create a positive climate for learning. Most teachers have good subject knowledge and they explain ideas clearly to pupils. Teachers model subject-specific vocabulary well and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning over time.
- Pupils benefit from effective teaching in a range of subjects. Where this happens, expectations are high and teachers use questioning to encourage pupils to think deeply.
- The school has benefited from links with a local outstanding school, particularly in developing the practice of recently qualified teachers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils show a good awareness of how to stay safe online. For example, they know about the dangers associated with social networking, such as online bullying and sexting.
- Pupils report that, on the few occasions when bullying takes place, it is dealt with effectively.
- The school has carried out considerable work on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender awareness. Consequently, there is a very open and accepting culture in the school, which places equal value and importance on every individual.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision are looked after well and engage well with their learning. Clear procedures are used to check pupils' attendance. There are good lines of communication between leaders and other providers. Pupils receive impartial and useful careers information and guidance to support their next stage of development. Over recent years, all pupils leaving the school have gone on to further education, employment or training.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The headteacher has refocused and refined the behaviour policy. This has led to some improvement in pupils' behaviour. However, not all teachers are adhering to this policy.

Pupils told the inspectors that there are times when low-level disruption interrupts their learning.

- The majority of pupils move around the site in an orderly manner. However, inspectors noticed some boisterous behaviour in corridors and outside buildings during break and lunchtime.
- Leaders have raised expectations of behaviour. As a result, fixed-term exclusions peaked last year. The number of exclusions has now fallen.
- Attendance has continued to improve and is above average overall. This is a result of improved communication with families and a new system of rewards for pupils. However, attendance is still below average for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Too many of these pupils do not attend school regularly. Leaders recognise that improving the attendance of these groups of pupils remains a continuing priority for improvement.
- Pupils' punctuality to school and lessons has improved significantly. Most pupils arrive at lessons with the equipment that they need.
- Pupils are generally polite and sociable.
- The school environment is well kept, with neat displays, and there is no litter or graffiti.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes for pupils require improvement because pupils' progress is uneven across subjects and year groups and for different groups of pupils.
- Pupils who left school in 2016 did not make good enough progress across a range of subjects.
- The large majority of pupils study a modern foreign language to GCSE level. Historically, outcomes in the language subjects have been weaker than in other subjects. However, teaching in this subject is now improving. Pupils currently at the school make better progress.
- The school's assessment information indicates that the progress of current pupils in the school is improving in most subjects.
- The gap between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally is closing, but steadily rather than rapidly. Until very recently, leaders have not been effective enough in evaluating the impact of their actions in this area.
- Progress in English and mathematics for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was significantly below the national average in 2016. Current pupils are beginning to make improved progress, but it is uneven across subjects.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do not make as much progress as they should. Some teachers challenge pupils to achieve high grades, but this is not consistent throughout the school.
- The school's own assessment information indicates that pupils' progress in key stage 3 is uneven across the curriculum. Inspection evidence confirms this to be true.
- The small number of pupils who attend alternative provision make good progress.

School details

Unique reference number	106139
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	10019801

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,040
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sarah Brown
Headteacher	Mrs Lynne Fox
Telephone number	0161 439 8045
Website	www.bramhallhigh.stockport.sch.uk/
Email address	headteacher@bramhallhigh.stockport.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 October 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Bramhall High School is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at Cedars, The Pendlebury Centre and Liverpool Football Academy.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning across all year groups and a wide range of subjects. Some of these were joint observations with school leaders.
- Inspectors met formally with three groups of pupils, as well as speaking with them in lessons and around the school. They listened to readers and considered 98 responses to the pupil online questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in lessons. They also looked at a sample of pupils' books to evaluate their learning over time in different subjects.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, taking into account 176 responses to the online Ofsted parent questionnaire, Parent View, including 135 free text responses.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and senior leaders, groups of middle leaders, teachers and representatives of the governing body. They met with the school's local authority adviser. Inspectors also held telephone conversations with representatives of the alternative providers.
- Inspectors considered the 89 responses to the online questionnaire for staff.
- The inspection team scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance, safeguarding information, minutes of governing body meetings, information on the progress made by pupils, training arrangements for teachers and other staff, checks on the quality of teaching, external reviews by consultants, the school's self-evaluation and the school improvement plan.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Vicky Atherton	Ofsted Inspector
Annette Patterson	Ofsted Inspector
Nell Banfield	Ofsted Inspector

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