

Baston House School

Baston Road, Hayes, Bromley, Kent BR2 7AB

Inspection dates

1–3 May 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Senior leaders are aware that the curriculum in the secondary phase is not as effective as it should be in meeting pupils' needs.
- The training for staff has not secured consistently high-quality teaching. Some adults do not challenge pupils enough, and their expectations are too low. As a result, pupils' progress varies across the school. For example, it is stronger in English and mathematics in the primary phase, but weaker in subjects such as science in the secondary phase.
- The sixth-form curriculum and the quality of teaching are not securing good outcomes.
- Leaders are beginning to improve how the school assesses pupils' progress. This is particularly to ensure that it provides more accurate information, which leaders can use to monitor the quality of teaching across the curriculum.
- The school has grown quickly, but middle leaders are not fully leading improvements in their areas of responsibility.
- Leaders have identified the need to improve some aspects of the school site. Appropriate plans are in place, and need to be rolled out in line with the planned timescales.
- Attendance in the secondary phase is not as high as it is in the primary phase.

The school has the following strengths

- The proprietor and senior leaders have ensured that the independent school standards have been met in full.
- The new team of senior leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are taking the right actions, and the school is improving quickly.
- Parents are right to be confident in many aspects of the school's work. For example, pupils feel safe and well supported. They become more confident and independent during their time at the school. They behave well.
- Pupils' welfare is given the highest priority. Leaders have a tight grip on safeguarding.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Governors, leaders and managers need to build on the recent improvements to further improve their effectiveness by:
 - sharpening the knowledge and skills of middle leaders so that they can lead improvements within their own areas of responsibility
 - strengthening the curriculum, particularly through developing and offering a wider range of accredited courses at key stage 4 and in the sixth form that best fit with pupils' needs and aspirations
 - refining and embedding the school's assessment of pupils' progress so that it gives an accurate picture of the progress that pupils are making
 - following through with their plans for the further improvements to be made to the school site and facilities.
- Developing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that outcomes for pupils, particularly at key stage 4 and in the sixth form, rapidly improve by:
 - continuing to improve the skills of teachers, including non-subject specialists, so that they use resources that best meet pupils' needs and challenge pupils in their learning
 - ensuring that teachers and supporting adults raise their expectations, and use lesson time more effectively so that pupils work more productively
 - ensuring that there is consistency in the way that supporting adults work with pupils to help them make the progress of which they are capable.
- Continue to improve pupils' attendance, particularly for those who are more persistently absent in the secondary phase, including the sixth form.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The senior leadership team has undergone significant change in the last 12 months. Recently appointed senior leaders, including the headteacher, have hit the ground running. They have grasped the school's strengths and weaknesses. They know what needs to improve, and are taking the right actions. The impact of their work can be seen in many areas of school life, for example in securing good behaviour and high staff morale. They have also pulled together an expenditure plan for improvements to the premises, and to improve facilities. Leaders have rightly identified the need for a library to support provision further. Overall, leaders have demonstrated the capacity to improve the school quickly, and have made sure that all the independent school standards are met.
- The senior leadership team works well together. Its members are full of ambition and commitment to improving the school. They are aware that many of their initiatives have yet to secure good teaching and good outcomes overall. A particular challenge is in ensuring that training for teachers and support staff makes more of a difference. Leaders know that some adults do not make their pupils work hard enough.
- Parents and carers who replied to Parent View, Ofsted's questionnaire, have confidence in the leadership and management of the school. One parent commented that 'Baston House has completely changed our lives', and another said that their child had settled in well and that queries are dealt with quickly.
- Leaders have created an inclusive school. One leader commented that one thing the school focuses on is helping pupils to 'find their voice and express their opinions'. This is seen in the school's work to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. For example, pupils learn and explore different cultures and beliefs, alongside opportunities to explore their own identity. Pupils also enjoy 'golden time' every Friday, where they can choose an enrichment activity which interests them.
- Leaders have worked hard to overhaul the school's assessment and target-setting processes. There is a clear process for using a variety of information to help establish a pupil's starting point (baseline). However, the way the school currently measures and assesses pupils' progress, particularly in the secondary phase, is not fully effective. At present, it does not give leaders accurate information to help inform their evaluation of the quality of teaching over time.
- The curriculum in the secondary phase, including the sixth form, is not effectively meeting the range of aspirations and interests of pupils. Although there are more courses on offer since the previous inspection, the school has grown quickly and has a large proportion of pupils in the secondary phase. Leaders are currently reviewing the curriculum, and are introducing new work-related courses. It is too early to be able to judge the impact of these courses on pupils' outcomes.
- With the growth of the school, the number of staff has also risen. Leaders have put in place a revised staffing structure, and some senior leaders have taken on different and new responsibilities. Middle leaders are not as secure as senior leaders in managing their areas of responsibility. They do not take part in a wide enough range of activities to enable them to check on the quality of teaching within their areas of responsibility. As a result, the impact that they have on improving teaching is limited.

Governance

- The governing body has undergone a significant change over the last year. A 'head of service', who is also a governor, was appointed from September 2017. The head of service meets the headteacher regularly, and gives challenge and support. The wider governing body is now much more secure in their understanding of the school's effectiveness.
- Governors have also agreed on a revised reporting model, for example in ensuring that they receive a range of comprehensive information from school leaders. They are aware of the need to ensure that minutes of governing body meetings reflect the challenging questions and dialogue that they have with school leaders.
- Governors have a clear long-term vision for the school, and have supported leaders by agreeing to fund much needed improvements to the premises.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's safeguarding policy is available on the school website. It is a comprehensive and detailed policy, which is effectively put into practice. Leaders have a thorough understanding of the risks that are faced by pupils at the school. They use their knowledge to ensure that staff are well trained, for example in child sexual exploitation, 'county lines' and children missing from education. Leaders check on the knowledge and understanding of staff in relation to safeguarding, and give regular updates on any welfare concerns. The staff community works well together to identify, help and manage child protection concerns.
- The leaders who oversee safeguarding have their finger on the pulse of managing safeguarding concerns for individual pupils. They keep meticulous records of conversations, meetings and the actions that they have taken. Leaders follow up on known concerns quickly. Multi-disciplinary team meetings take place regularly. These meetings give a confidential platform for relevant leaders, teachers and therapists to come together to discuss any changes in a pupil's behaviour, to share information and to decide on how best to help any pupil that needs support. Leaders analyse a range of information, including attendance and behaviour incidents, to be alert to any potential cause for concern.
- Parents and carers who replied to Parent View, and those that replied to the school's survey last year, say that their children are safe and well looked after. This is echoed by pupils, who describe the school as a close community where adults are supportive. As such, pupils feel safe at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching across the school is variable. This variability comes from the following main areas, where teachers do not: have consistently high expectations for the work that their pupils should be producing; use time sufficiently well to help pupils to structure their learning; use high-quality 'autism friendly' resources or teaching strategies; or offer enough challenge to pupils, either from their questioning or choice of resources,

to support pupils in thinking deeply enough about what they are learning.

- These combine to result in pupils making variable progress over time within different subjects and key stages. For example, in the secondary phase, pupils who have secure writing skills, which they demonstrate in English, are not being challenged to use and apply these skills in other subjects, such as science.
- Pupils who have shown that they have understood certain concepts, for example if they have a higher-ability starting point or are capable of learning even more, are not given sufficient challenge. As a result, some pupils do not deepen their knowledge and understanding to the level of which they are capable.
- Some teachers are not teaching in their specialism, notably in the secondary phase. Although teachers try hard and are enthusiastic about their teaching, they need further support, for example from middle leaders, to sharpen their subject delivery.
- The quality of teaching given to pupils from supporting adults varies. Where it is more effective, supporting adults ask pupils questions and prompt them to think. In other instances, supporting adults are not proactive enough in either supporting the teacher or challenging pupils to work harder.
- Some teaching is highly effective. For example, in mathematics in the primary phase, regular use of visual and sensory teaching helps gain pupils' interest, giving them motivation to take part in activities. When this happens, pupils rise to the challenge and produce consistently good work over time.
- The therapy support is a strength of the school's teaching and support provision. The therapy team is directly involved in helping pupils to develop their motor skills and social skills and learning how to manage their emotional well-being. For example, this was seen in the primary school 'rise and shine' morning activities, where pupils learn to explore and express their emotions. This provides an effective start to the school day.
- Adults who work with pupils establish positive relationships. Typically, they encourage pupils to take part in their activities.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils join the school often after having long periods of time out of formal education. Over their time at the school, they become more confident, articulate and engaged children and young people. The comments from pupils during the inspection shared some common themes, namely: adults are supportive and encouraging. This helps pupils to secure a good level of personal development. Leaders have planned a new programme to encourage pupils to take on responsibilities, such as 'Baston ambassadors' and 'digital leaders'.
- Teaching and activities outside the classroom help pupils to become more independent. For example, at key stage 4 and in the sixth form, pupils learn about independent living. They find this useful, for example in exploring their career goals or learning about money. Some pupils are helped and encouraged with independent travel to and from school.
- Pupils at the school mix well together. The school's personal, social, health and education

(PSHE) programme helps pupils to learn about a range of different topics, including gender stereotypes and arranged marriage.

- Pupils told the inspector that bullying is rare. They also said that if they had any concerns or problems, there were adults that they could turn to. If they did ask for help, they felt that they would get help quickly. Parents typically agreed with this view. Pupils were able to explain a variety of ways where they had learned to stay safe, for example when online, exploring the difference between right and wrong, and understanding social boundaries when interacting with other people.
- The school's careers education and guidance provision has been revised recently. New relationships with a local job centre and the local authority careers service have resulted in some very recent workshops and trial interviews for key stage 4 pupils and students in the sixth form. Pupils regularly learn about curriculum vitae preparation and exploring career goals. Leaders have plans in place to further embed careers provision, including at key stage 3.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Adults who work with children typically establish clear boundaries. For example, this includes helping pupils learn how to interact with each other and adults, in preparation for life after school.
- Pupils generally behave well. When pupils are having a bad day, adults are there to support, persevere and work to get pupils back on track.
- School records show that physical restraint is used only as a last resort and is carefully recorded. Leaders analyse trends and patterns over time. They look to provide proactive support to help pupils manage their own behaviour and emotions.
- Pupils' attendance is carefully managed. Leaders liaise with the relevant local authority quickly, and work with parents as best they can. A review of case studies showed that pupils' attendance rose significantly, compared to their attendance before joining the school. However, leaders have rightly established a priority of improving attendance, particularly for those who are persistently absent in the secondary phase.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils in the secondary phase are entered for accredited courses, such as GCSE English and/or mathematics, at different times, for example at the end of Year 10 or Year 11. The school's assessment information from last year shows that most pupils were successful in achieving an accredited qualification in English and/or mathematics and/or science.
- Reviews of pupils' work during the inspection show that pupils' progress varies in the secondary phase. English is typically strong; for example, pupils practise accessing GCSE examination questions. However, their literacy skills are not as effectively promoted in other subjects, including science.
- Additionally, in the secondary phase, there is variation in the depth of knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils gain in relation to their different starting points across the subjects that they study. This is primarily because teachers do not ensure that their resources and questioning push pupils hard enough. This prevents pupils from making the

progress of which they are capable.

- In the primary phase, reviews of pupils' work suggest that teaching over time challenges pupils and meets their needs more effectively. As a result, in English and mathematics, in particular, pupils' progress is stronger.
- The effective use of occupational therapy and speech and language therapy helps pupils to develop other skills, such as their ability to communicate, interact with other people and to work independently. This is particularly so from January of this year, when the new therapy team was put in place. The therapy team audited the education, health and care plans to ensure that their provision is linked to the therapy outcomes, as stated in the plans.
- Pupils have opportunities to develop a range of other knowledge and skills, such as with regard to the world around them. Through topics in independent living and PSHE, pupils learn about staying safe and how to work with other pupils and adults. This helps pupils to be better prepared for life after school.
- Overall, the primary phase is successful in building on pupils' starting points, and prepares them effectively for learning at key stages 3 and 4. However, the secondary phase does not build on these successes effectively enough.

Sixth form provision

Requires improvement

- Leaders know that the curriculum in the sixth form, including college provision, is too limited. Although more work-related subjects have been offered recently, the curriculum does not currently ensure that students make good progress from their starting points.
- Over time, there has been insufficient monitoring of students' progress and attainment, including the evaluation of students' experiences of their college provision.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form varies. The features of less effective teaching, seen at key stage 4, echo into the sixth form. For example, some students who have achieved well at the end of key stage 4 are not being stretched in some subjects, such as GCSE mathematics and science. They are, therefore, not making the progress of which they are capable across their curriculum.
- Students learn to think in a variety of ways, including in their lessons on independent living, about their short- and long-term goals and career plans. However, leaders are right to have identified and put in place plans to improve the quality of careers provision, particularly to include students having access to more impartial advice.
- Students' attendance is currently lower than it is for other year groups at the school.
- Supporting adults accompany pupils to their college provision to look after their welfare. There is some evidence to show, from staff and students, that work experience has helped boost students' confidence, and helped them to decide on what they want to do once they leave the school.
- Pupils' progress in their independent living course shows that they are successful in completing accredited units such as 'managing social relationships' and 'the family'. In some entry-level courses, such as science, students learn how to apply their knowledge, for example in testing out some facts that companies say about their products.
- Students feel well supported at school. They describe it as 'caring' and 'safe'. There are

suitable enrichment activities on offer for students, including sports activities.

- Overall, taking into account the sixth form's strengths and weaknesses, it is not currently maximising students' individual academic potential. Students could be better prepared for the next steps in their education, training or employment.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 136265 |
| DfE registration number | 305/6082 |
| Inspection number | 10038175 |

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

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| Type of school | Other independent special school |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 5 to 19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 83 |
| Of which, number on roll in sixth form | 15 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | Options Autism (7) Ltd |
| Chair | Graham Baker |
| Headteacher | Greg Sorrell |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | Primary £45,225 Secondary £46,760 |
| Telephone number | 0208 462 1010 |
| Website | www.bastonhouse.org.uk |
| Email address | info@bastonhouseschool.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 14–16 October 2014 |

Information about this school

- The school opened in 2010. The number of pupils on roll has increased significantly since the previous inspection. There is a much higher proportion of pupils in the secondary phase, including the sixth form.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care

plan. All pupils have needs that relate to autism spectrum disorder.

- There has been a significant change in the senior leadership of the school. The current headteacher took up his post in January 2018. The head of service and deputy headteacher took up their roles in September 2017.
- The school is not currently using any alternative provision.
- Some students in the sixth form attend courses or work experience at Capel Manor or Lewisham College on set days during the school week.
- The school was last inspected in October 2014, when it was judged good for overall effectiveness and met all the regulatory requirements. An emergency inspection was carried out in September 2015, which focused on the regulatory requirements for students' welfare, health and safety, the way complaints are handled and leadership and management. The school was judged to have met all the requirements inspected.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector, jointly with a senior leader, visited lessons in a range of subjects across both the primary and secondary phases. The inspector considered a wide range of pupils' work, and case studies provided by the school, to evaluate the quality of pupils' learning over time.
- The inspector held a range of meetings with school staff to evaluate the impact of their work. The inspector held a meeting with the governing body, where the chair of the governing body (who represented the proprietor) joined via a conference call. The inspector had a telephone call with a representative of the local authority special educational needs service.
- The inspector reviewed the school's surveys of pupils', parents' and staff views. There were 22 replies to Parent View, Ofsted's questionnaire for parents, which were also considered. The inspector spoke to some parents at the end of the school day. The inspector evaluated a large number of replies to Ofsted's survey for staff.
- The inspector scrutinised a variety of documentation provided by leaders, including: internal assessment information for pupils in all year groups; leaders' self-evaluation; the improvement plan; minutes of governing body meetings; attendance and behaviour information; a variety of school policies; the single central record of recruitment checks and a wide range of other information relating to the safeguarding of pupils.

Inspection team

Sam Hainey, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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