

The Billericay School

School Road, Billericay, Essex CM12 9LH

Inspection dates

1–2 May 2018

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has a clear and focused plan for the school. His relentless drive to achieve 'success for all' is leading improvement in the quality of education.
- School leaders, governors and trustees have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and the areas that still need development.
- The progress of boys and disadvantaged pupils is improving as teachers know their pupils well and ensure that they understand concepts before moving on to new learning.
- As a result of highly effective professional development, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make good progress in all their subjects as they are well supported in their learning.
- The curriculum, including careers guidance, is of a high quality. Pupils are guided well and achieve appropriate post-16 and post-18 education, training or employment opportunities.
- Staff care deeply about the pupils, ensuring that they feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe.
- The leaders' work to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good. Pupils' appreciation of and respect for diversity are strong.
- The sixth-form provision is good. Students receive high-quality teaching and support and are making good progress in most subjects.
- Although the progress of disadvantaged pupils is improving, pupils are not attaining as well as other pupils nationally. Some of the most able pupils are not attaining the highest grades.
- In a very small minority of Year 8 lessons, teachers do not consistently challenge some low-level disruption. As a result, learning slows and the quality of work dips for a very small number of pupils.
- Leaders in charge of behaviour and SEN and/or disabilities are not as sharp as other middle leaders in their monitoring and evaluation.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - learning meets the needs of all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and the most able
 - all teachers have high expectations of the presentation and quality of pupils' work
 - all teachers of Year 8 pupils consistently challenge low-level disruption
 - leaders in charge of behaviour and SEN and/or disabilities evaluate the impact of their work more robustly and amend strategies accordingly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders, governors and the board of trustees have successfully tackled the school's recent decline in achievement. They have established a culture of high expectations and aspirations for pupils and teachers. Staffing changes, holding teachers sharply to account and improving the quality of professional development are driving school improvement.
- The headteacher is passionately ambitious for the school and its pupils and his insistence on excellence is shaping higher ambition among staff.
- Leaders seek external quality assurance through the local authority, the trust and other local schools. As a result, their self-evaluation is based on thorough internal and external analysis and accurately identifies the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school improvement plans are rooted in this accurate self-evaluation and set out clearly what actions leaders need to take. Subject leaders regularly monitor the impact of what they do and amend their plans when necessary.
- A priority for senior leaders has been to develop the skills and expertise of middle leaders. Senior leaders have taken decisive action where there are concerns and have made significant improvements. Subject leaders are now clear about how their roles and responsibilities contribute to whole-school improvement. This means that they prioritise their work effectively and focus on the actions which will have the greatest impact.
- Subject leaders ensure that assessment of pupils' work is accurate. Staff moderate their judgements about pupils' work effectively through their work with other providers to share good practice. Consequently, there is confidence that assessment information is reliable.
- Newly qualified and trainee teachers are passionate advocates of the school and its pupils. School leaders support them well and subject leaders develop their teaching skills through regular mentoring and effective support.
- Leaders' considered use of the pupil premium funding is boosting disadvantaged pupils' achievement. Some of this funding has been used to run an enhanced support programme which focuses on strengthening English and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils also spoke highly of the 'achievement for all' programme, which provides support for pupils, parents and carers through regular discussion with teachers.
- Pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum. Leaders regularly review and refine the curriculum to ensure that pupils have opportunities to follow courses that meet their interests and future aspirations. Pupils value highly the support and guidance they receive from staff to make their subject choices.
- An extensive range of extra-curricular activities support the curriculum well. These activities enable pupils to deepen their understanding of learning beyond the classroom. Most-able pupils spoke enthusiastically about the science, technology, engineering and mathematics enrichment, in particular the robotics competitions. Pupils receive regular opportunities to develop their understanding of, and to prepare for, life in modern Britain. Through assemblies and tutor time activities, pupils are able

to develop their understanding of different religious beliefs and moral points of view. Particularly striking is their support for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.

- Leaders make effective use of the additional funding they receive for pupils who arrive at the school in Year 7 needing to catch up in English and mathematics. Pupils spend some of their time working with specialists in small groups. Current Year 7 pupils make good progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. Some pupils are receiving additional support in numeracy in Year 8 as they did not manage to catch up in Year 7.
- The leaders responsible for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are developing their practice in evaluating the impact of their actions strategically. Although they closely monitor individual pupils, they have not systematically tracked the progress of cohorts. This has limited their evaluation of the effectiveness of different interventions used to support learning.
- Leaders in charge of behaviour have successfully reduced the number of fixed-term exclusions and can articulate clearly why this is the case. However, their evaluation of the impact of the withdrawal room upon pupil groups and their learning is less sharp.

Governance of the school

- The trustees of Compass Education Trust and the local governing body have a secure and precise understanding of the quality of the school's provision and of those areas that require further development. Governors receive regular detailed reports from senior leaders. They use these to provide rigorous challenge and appropriate support to the headteacher and his senior leaders. Governors are tenacious in holding school leaders to account.
- Governors use the assessment information provided by school leaders to establish a good understanding of the progress being made by all groups of pupils. They deepen their understanding and their evaluation of the school's effectiveness through regular visits and meetings with staff and pupils.
- Members of the local governing body have ensured that the spending of the pupil premium and other funding is strategically planned. They regularly ask for updates regarding the delivery of programmes and their impact.
- Governors fully understand their responsibility in relation to safeguarding pupils. The governor who has responsibility for safeguarding regularly undertakes visits to check on the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The atmosphere around the school is caring and inclusive. There is a culture of safeguarding in the school, as well as of mutual respect and tolerance.

- There is effective supervision on entry to the school in the mornings, at break and lunchtimes and between lessons. Consequently, the conduct of pupils around the site is calm and orderly.
- Senior leaders, including governors, check safeguarding records regularly. The school has comprehensive policies for safeguarding. As a result, the school takes timely, supportive and appropriate actions to keep pupils safe.
- School leaders responsible for safeguarding are knowledgeable and ensure that all staff and governors have appropriate and up-to-date safeguarding training. Staff know about child protection procedures, are vigilant and know how to report any concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have a thorough subject knowledge and a detailed understanding of the demands of examination courses. They use these to good effect to plan sequences of learning that develop pupils' knowledge and understanding and support them in making good progress.
- The support and planning for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are effective. Most pupils, from their various starting points, are given tailored guidance about how to improve. Learning support assistants help pupils to overcome any misunderstandings so that they can participate in and understand the lesson fully.
- Teachers apply the school's chosen approach to feedback consistently. As a result, pupils know what they need to do to reach higher levels of attainment. Pupils also give each other helpful guidance when they critique each other's work.
- Pupils often talk through their ideas and explain their thinking in pairs or to the class. Many teachers skilfully elicit extended responses from pupils and invite other pupils to contribute and build on the ideas of others. Boys engage well where this occurs, as their ideas are shared and valued.
- Leaders have focused heavily over the last year on improving extended writing in English and history. In these subjects, useful writing frameworks guide pupils in their planning and in developing coherent ideas. The development of technical vocabulary across subjects is equally strong. For example, in a Year 9 biology lesson, pupils discussed diffusion with confidence.
- In many lessons, disadvantaged pupils benefit from reading and discussing higher-quality answers by the most able pupils. For example, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson, a most able pupil explained helpfully how to calculate compound measures. This helped the disadvantaged pupil to work through the more difficult questions.
- Where learning is weaker for the most able pupils, teachers do not check carefully enough how well pupils are learning. Teachers are too quick to accept work that is not of the highest standard. Most-able pupils told inspectors that, in some lessons, they have to undertake the easy work before they are given a difficult task to do. When this occurs, they become bored and switch off.
- In a very small minority of lessons in Year 8, when the work set does not ignite pupils' interests or activities go on for too long, a small proportion of pupils can lose focus and engage in low-level disruption.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and they are willing to try again when they get questions wrong. One Year 8 boy commented, 'We all make mistakes and that's how we learn.'
- Pupils are proud of their school and their appearance. A few pupils do not take enough care with the presentation of their work.
- Pupils recognise different types of risk. They show a well-developed understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when online, as a result of the school's detailed work in this area.
- Careers guidance is strong across all key stages. Pupils are successfully encouraged to take advantage of many opportunities for engagement with local employers, apprenticeship providers and universities. Pupils are well supported by work experience and other activities to make good choices about their future plans. They speak highly of the one-to-one sessions they receive with senior leaders.
- Pupils are given strong messages about different types of bullying, including cyber bullying. Pupils say that bullying is rare and that they know whom to approach if it does happen. The majority of pupils believe that the school deals with bullying quickly and effectively.
- The focus on ensuring that pupils develop the skills to be healthy and happy are seen clearly in pupils' understanding of fitness and diet, and mental well-being. Pupils talk confidently about strategies to cope with examination pressures.
- The support for those children who are looked after is good. Support plans are detailed and involve the pupils so that they can have ownership of their development. The tutorial programme has been strengthened so that pupils' social and emotional needs are better supported.
- The majority of parents are supportive of the school and cite pastoral care as one of its key strengths. One parent commented via the Ofsted online questionnaire Parent View, 'It has been a pleasure to see my daughter blossom since she started school.'
Inspectors agree with their view.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are very welcoming to visitors and are exceptionally polite, holding doors open and making interesting small talk.
- Most pupils behave well in lessons. They listen closely to teachers and are eager to learn.
- Punctuality, both at the beginning of and throughout the day, is good. The overall attendance of pupils is average. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance is improving. However, persistent absence, particularly for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, is

too high. This is in part due to pupils' complex medical needs. Leaders have rightly prioritised a range of initiatives to reduce persistent absence but it is too early to see their full impact.

- The number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced significantly. Leaders have used alternative ways of addressing poor behaviour, including through working with other schools.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' outcomes are good because the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time is good. Scrutiny of pupils' work showed that pupils are making consistently good progress across most subjects. The school's own records of pupils' progress confirm this.
- The proportion of pupils achieving a good pass in English and mathematics was above average in 2017. Current school performance data indicates that this should continue.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress. This is because teachers helpfully address the individual needs of these pupils and monitor their progress carefully.
- Current children who are looked after are achieving better than previously. This is due to teachers regularly discussing performance with individuals and making sure that they are supported in their next steps.
- Disadvantaged pupils have made below-average progress over the last two years. However, current progress has improved overall for this group of pupils, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils perform well in science. GCSE progress in 2017 was not as strong as in previous years. Current pupils are making good progress in their studies over time.
- Performance in English, history and languages is improving due to the improving quality of teaching. Evidence shows that pupils are increasingly able to extend their writing and access the higher-level skills needed to improve outcomes.
- Boys are progressing well. The gap between boys' and girls' performance is closing in a wide range of subjects.
- In 2017, the progress made by the most able pupils was below average. This group of pupils do not always make strong progress. This is because some teachers do not always ensure that these pupils complete work that is challenging enough to enable them to attain the highest grades.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leadership of the sixth form is strong. The curriculum offer is broad and students have the opportunity to study different curriculum pathways which include traditional A-level provision alongside vocational qualifications. Leaders respond to the interests of students. For example, they have increased the number of courses linked to the

business and finance sector as students' aspirations are moving in this direction. Work experience is also carefully matched to aspirations and needs.

- Students receive excellent careers information, advice and guidance and feel well supported to move to either education, employment or training. Students said to inspectors that their needs come first: 'They don't force you to take A levels or go to university; rather, they explore what you want to do.' Students benefit from one-to-one tuition in making their applications. A high proportion advance to higher education.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers know their subject content and examination syllabuses well. They plan effectively to meet the full range of needs of the students in their classes and provide students with highly individualised support. Students respond well to teachers' advice and take time to reflect and refine their work.
- Leaders have recognised that students have not been making sufficient progress in chemistry, history, geography and English. They have implemented a range of strategies to address this, which have been successful in improving the quality of teaching and have enabled students to make more rapid progress.
- Leaders use effective systems to monitor students' achievement. They have successfully intervened so that more of the most able students are attaining the highest grades. Current assessment information indicates that students are making good progress with their courses.
- Few students join the sixth form who have not attained a good pass in GCSE English and mathematics. When this occurs, students who retake the GCSEs usually achieve a pass or a good pass.
- Students say that they are well looked after and talk appreciatively of the personalised support. A Year 12 student who joined the school from another local provider commented: 'They know you here and they care about you. I am more than a number, I am a person who is known to them.' All students say that they feel safe.
- Safeguarding is effective in the sixth form because teachers are vigilant, and effective systems are consistently followed.
- Students enjoy being in the sixth form. They appreciate the opportunities for leadership and are good role models for the younger pupils. A number help by being mentors and supporting discussions in tutor times.

School details

Unique reference number	136861
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10052623

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,634
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	254
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Colin Breathwick
Headteacher	Ahson Mohammed
Telephone number	01277 655 191
Website	www.billericay.essex.sch.uk/
Email address	info@billericay.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 October 2013

Information about this school

- The Billericay School became an academy in 2011. It formed a multi-academy trust with The Bromfords School and Sixth Form College in September 2017. The school is also the lead school for the Billericay Teaching Alliance and the Billericay School-centred Initial Teacher Training.
- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The majority of pupils are from a White British background and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, including those with a

statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan, is lower than the national average.

- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average.
- No pupils currently attend alternative provision.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning at length in 57 lessons and undertook 10 learning walks, where they observed 41 parts of lessons. They also observed four support sessions. Some lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders. Inspectors also observed tutor time and assemblies and looked at pupils' work in lessons across all year groups.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher, the two deputy headteachers, newly qualified and trainee teachers, trustees, members of the local governing body and a local authority adviser.
- Inspectors held meetings with the school leaders who have responsibility for safeguarding, teaching, behaviour, attendance, sixth form and SEN and/or disabilities.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They listened to Year 7 pupils reading and spoke formally with pupils from all key stages. Over the two days, inspectors spoke informally with pupils about their learning and their safety.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school's development plan, minutes of meetings of the trust board and the local governing body, information about the attainment and progress of all pupils, records relating to behaviour, attendance, safeguarding and SEN and/or disabilities, school surveys and information on the school's website. They also checked the school's single central register.
- Inspectors evaluated 154 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 77 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Liz Smith, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Sutton	Ofsted Inspector
Anne Pepper	Ofsted Inspector
David Davies	Ofsted Inspector
Lizzie Jeanes	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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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