

The E-ACT Burnham Park Academy

Opendale Road, Burnham, Slough, Buckinghamshire SL1 7LZ

Inspection dates

6–7 March 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- For too long, pupils at this school have not benefited from a good quality of education. Their achievement has been weak, particularly in key stage 3.
- The multi-academy trust took over the school in 2012. During the past five years, the numbers of pupils at the school have declined drastically and they continue to do so. Trustees paused sixth-form provision two years ago and are now proposing to close the school.
- Trustees have struggled to recruit and retain leaders and teachers over time. There are currently no subject leaders in English or mathematics and shortages of specialist teachers in science and across the curriculum.
- The early signs of improvement made through the dedication of the new headteacher and his team in 2016 have been unsustainable. Staffing turbulence and shortages have led to a decline in standards and attendance.
- Many parents have lost faith in the school and are moving their children elsewhere.
- Teachers neither have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve nor the quality of work they should complete.
- Low-level disruption from some pupils slows the pace of the learning for others.
- Leaders have an overview of the requirements for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, staff are not making sure that these needs are met in lessons. Pupils with SEND have made poor progress in the past and continue to do so.
- Assessment is not used well enough to inform teaching. Teachers do not intervene to adapt teaching quickly enough to prevent groups of pupils, including the disadvantaged and most-able, from underachieving.
- Despite leaders' efforts, pupils' attendance remains below average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND is particularly poor. This has severely hindered the progress made by these groups.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and his staff have worked hard to secure improved pupils' attitudes towards learning.
- Staff work hard to build positive relationships within the school and the local community.
- Safeguarding is effective. This is a school that cares for its pupils and their welfare. Pupils are supported well by pastoral staff.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve governance, leadership and management, by:
 - strengthening subject leadership in English and mathematics and across the curriculum
 - ensuring that more effective monitoring of the quality of teaching supports teachers to raise expectations and improve outcomes
 - ensuring that trustees hold leaders to account to fully evaluate the impact of the pupil premium
 - improving the quality of the curriculum and ensuring that teachers' planning systematically develops pupils' knowledge and skills in science and the foundation subjects.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly in key stage 3, by ensuring teachers:
 - pitch work at the right level, particularly for pupils of lower attainment and for those who are most-able, so that no time is wasted
 - make effective use of assessment and planning to support pupils' progress through the school
 - consider what pupils know and can do and provide teaching that builds on their knowledge and understanding and matches their needs
 - are aware of the barriers to learning faced by disadvantaged pupils and plan learning to meet their needs
 - raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve and increase the level of challenge
 - develop pupils' reasoning and problem-solving in mathematics.
- Improve attendance, particularly for those pupils who are persistently absent, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.

External reviews of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders have ensured that this is a school that cares for its pupils and provides increasing opportunities for them to get involved in local community projects. However, the school has lost its way in ensuring that pupils achieve academically. The school has not provided a good quality of education for its pupils since opening as an academy in 2012. Pupils currently attending Burnham Park continue to underachieve.
- Following his appointment in 2016, the headteacher has worked with trustees to challenge the underperformance of staff. This resulted in many teachers leaving. There were some early signs of improvement in 2017, but these have not been sustained. Over time, the school has struggled to recruit sufficient numbers of new leaders and teachers. This staffing turbulence has meant that leaders' well-intentioned training packages for staff have been ineffective. Consequently, over time, trustees, the regional education team and school leaders have overseen a decline in pupils' outcomes, attendance and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The multi-academy trust (E-ACT) recognises the significant decline in pupil numbers and standards, and system leaders' and school leaders' limited capacity to bring about improvement in the future. Earlier this year, E-ACT announced that it is seeking to close the school by September 2019. Should Burnham Park close, trustees are offering current pupils and staff places at another of their local secondary schools.
- The headteacher and his senior team are passionately committed to the pupils and frustrated by the proposed closure. Although no final decision has been made to close the school, the trust has directed school leaders to focus their efforts on the transition of pupils and staff to the other school by the end of the year. Consequently, this has restricted leaders' capacity to maintain and improve teaching and learning this year and standards have declined still further.
- Middle leadership is lacking in English and mathematics and fragile across the rest of the curriculum. Leaders are dependent on support from leaders within the multi-academy trust. However, this support has failed to address underperformance across key stage 3 and in mathematics, science and humanities in key stage 4.
- The curriculum fails to provide pupils with the necessary knowledge that they need to be successful. There is a wide range of subjects on offer on the timetable, but too little thought is given to what pupils actually need to learn. This is especially the case in key stage 3. Too often, teaching over time has not enabled appropriate knowledge and skills to be secured. As a result, pupils' learning is superficial and fragile.
- Leaders' and trustees' monitoring has lacked sufficient rigour to ensure that the pupil premium funding has had sufficient impact in raising standards for disadvantaged pupils. This group continues to make weak progress and compare poorly to other pupils nationally.
- Leaders ensure that Burnham Park is a warm and welcoming school. However, while the provision for pupils with SEND is caring and nurturing too many of these pupils do not achieve well or attend school regularly.

Governance of the school

- E-ACT's system leaders (regional education team) have failed to ensure a sustained improvement to the quality of leadership and teaching. This failure has led to a decline in standards and attendance.
- Trustees do not hold leaders to account well enough. Over the past two years, and especially since their decision to seek to close the school, system leaders have not ensured a sufficiently high quality of education for pupils.
- Trustees have not made sure that the additional funding provided to support disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND or those who join the school with low attainment in English and mathematics has been spent effectively. They have not reviewed the impact of the use of the Year 7 catch-up funding for last year and, consequently, have not published this information or how they intend to use this funding to support current pupils.
- The school's ambassadorial advisory group perform some aspects of local governance. They are dedicated to supporting the work of the school in the local community. They have worked well with leaders to support community artistic and charity fundraising projects and improved communication between the school and local community.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Well-managed systems and the team approach of leaders and office staff ensure that all pupils are kept safe.
- There is a robust system in place to check adults' suitability to work with children and staff qualifications. Regular, appropriate training for all staff is provided by the school on safeguarding matters and staff know how to react if they have any concerns about a child's welfare.
- Clear and comprehensive record-keeping supports work with external agencies, where appropriate, to help vulnerable pupils and their families.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- There have been frequent changes in staffing across the curriculum, including English, mathematics and science. This inconsistency has inhibited pupils' progress. The quality of teaching is weak across key stage 3 and in Year 10. Typically, teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are not high enough. Too many pupils have gaps in their learning which means that they do not sufficiently develop knowledge and skills to extend their understanding.
- Too much time is lost by little challenge and easy work for pupils in key stage 3. Although some teaching is stronger in Year 11, the gaps in pupils' learning have already been established. These significant gaps inhibit the chances of success for Year 11 pupils in their forthcoming examinations.
- Assessment practice in the school is underdeveloped and unevenly implemented, which is impacting on the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers do not use pupils' starting points to shape and adapt their lessons. Consequently, pupils are not building

on prior learning and often move on to new topics and areas of study without being secure in what they have learned.

- Pupils are often unclear about what it is they need to know and do to improve their learning.
- Time in lessons is not always used well. Where this is the case, this leads to some low-level disruption, especially where teaching does not engage, stimulate or inspire the pupils.
- The teaching of mathematics and science is not good enough. Too often, work is poorly planned or too easy. This does not help pupils to catch up with others nationally. For example, in a science lesson, several pupils were unclear why they were expected to repeat a task and there was insufficient challenge to encourage them to think. Consequently, several pupils quickly lost concentration and began to talk loudly with others.
- A small group of pupils with SEND in key stage 3 benefit from an alternative curriculum pathway in the mixed-age 'Aspire' class. In these lessons, pupils receive teaching that is better adapted to their learning needs. Pupils told inspectors that they appreciate the nurturing environment that staff provide in Aspire. Pupils described to the inspectors that they felt more confident about their learning as a result.
- Weaknesses in the quality of teaching and assessment across the curriculum mean that disadvantaged pupils, and those with SEND who do not benefit from this tailored Aspire provision, are not having their needs met in mainstream classes.
- Staff have good relationships with pupils and a relaxed rapport with them. However, some pupils take advantage of this and chatter in lessons, which slows down the learning of other pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe at school. Older pupils reported that they value how the headteacher has changed the culture of the school. They now feel much more secure at Burnham Park. This view is supported by the surveys from parents and staff. When there are incidents of bullying, they are dealt with appropriately.
- Burnham Park has a nurturing and welcoming culture, and equalities are promoted well. Pupils said that it is acceptable to be 'different' in school.
- Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and assemblies provide pupils with a range of opportunities to explore their place in the world and to learn about keeping themselves safe and healthy. However, pupils reported that there are some inconsistencies in the quality of PSHE across the school and that they would value more visiting speakers.
- Pupils in Year 11 receive careers advice and information on the opportunities that are available to pupils after the age of 16. Year 10 pupils reported valuing the opportunity

to engage in work experience. However, the programme of careers advice and guidance is far from comprehensive and does not start until it is too late. Not all pupils are well prepared for their next steps in learning.

- Pupils who attend alternative provision are supported appropriately. The school ensures regular communication with these providers so that any concerns with behaviour, attendance or progress are followed up.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Pupils' poor attendance presents a serious barrier to their learning. Overall attendance is well below average for secondary schools and has been so for some time. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has declined recently but is still well above the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND is particularly low.
- Leaders and the newly appointed pastoral community officer have very recently focused on improving persistent absence. In addition, they work hard with families to support them in bringing their children to school regularly and on time. While there are early signs of improvements with a target cohort, it is too early to see a sustained impact from this work on reducing overall absence.
- Low-level disruption is too common, especially in key stage 3. This has a detrimental effect on the learning of these pupils and their peers. It is most common in classes where pupils need to catch up most in their learning.
- Pupils understand that teasing, bullying and prejudice are wrong. They have an understanding and respect for the school's rules and feel that most adults will support them should they experience any incidents of unkindness. The incidence of poor behaviour resulting in exclusions has reduced from last year. However, as a proportion, the rates of exclusion are still much higher than most in secondary schools.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Outcomes have been very low for all pupils since the previous inspection. Although there were some signs of improvement in English and mathematics in 2017, pupils' achievement in science and the humanities that year was particularly poor. In 2018, although pupils' progress in English was in line with the national average, outcomes declined in mathematics and pupils underachieved in all subject areas that were studied by a high proportion of pupils.
- From their starting points, progress for all pupils by the end of key stage 4 was very low in mathematics, science and humanities in 2018 and 2017.
- Middle-prior-attaining pupils, pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils have all underachieved in the past and these groups continue to do so. The pupil premium and additional funding to support pupils with SEND have not been used effectively.
- Pupils' work demonstrates that they are not making the progress that they should. In both key stages, inspectors saw examples of pupils regressing in their learning due to a lack of appropriate challenge over time.

- Leaders' information about how well pupils are currently achieving is not always accurate. Staffing turbulence, a lack of subject leadership in English and mathematics, and temporary staff teaching the foundation subjects mean that teaching is not sufficiently well moderated. As a result, leaders are not able to intervene quickly enough to address any underperformance.
- Progress in science is particularly poor. There has been a high level of staffing changes and there are still many temporary teachers in science. The externally produced curriculum planning being used by the department has not been adapted well enough to meet pupils' needs. Consequently, teachers are not providing learning that builds on pupils' starting points and too many pupils are underachieving across key stages 3 and 4.
- The poor progress pupils have made over time has limited their outcomes and opportunities when they have left the school. Of the pupils who left Year 11 in 2018, the proportion who progressed into education or employment was significantly lower than the national average.

School details

Unique reference number	137864
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10053283

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
Number of pupils on the school roll	214
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Regional Education Director	Mohsen Ojja
Headteacher	James Hughes
Telephone number	01628 662107
Website	www.e-actburnhampark.org.uk
Email address	info@e-actburnhampark.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 July 2016

Information about this school

- The E-ACT Burnham Park Academy is a small secondary school. It became an academy in April 2012 and is sponsored and governed by the E-ACT multi-academy trust. The trust is responsible for governance and this is arranged through a regional education team, with some aspects being devolved to a local ambassadorial advisory group.
- The school has 140 places in each year group but the number of pupils on roll has fallen significantly over the past five years. The proportion of pupils leaving before the end of Year 11 is much higher than is typical nationally.
- At the time of this inspection, the multi-academy trust was proposing to close the school. Although no final decision had been made, given the falling number of pupils applying to the academy, E-ACT were engaging in a public consultation process on closing the academy as a mainstream secondary school in September 2019. This consultation process began on 30 January 2019 and was due to close on 29 March 2019.
- Trustees and leaders took the decision not to produce school improvement plans since

taking the decision to consult on the closure of the school. These plans have been replaced by transition planning documents outlining the sequence of events needed to allow staff and pupils to transfer to E-ACT's other local secondary school at the end of the year.

- Although designated as an 11 to 19 school, the school paused entry into its sixth form in 2017. There are currently no students studying key stage 5 courses at the school.
- The community served by the school has levels of deprivation in line with the national average.
- The proportions of disadvantaged pupils and those who speak English as an additional language are both slightly higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is well above the national average. Similarly, the proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is higher than that found nationally. The school's 'Aspire' curriculum offers an alternative, mixed-age curriculum pathway for a small number of key stage 3 pupils with SEND.
- A small number of pupils attend an alternative provision at The Wycombe Grange Pupil Referral unit or at local colleges.
- The school is led by a headteacher appointed in September 2016, and three assistant headteachers. There have been several changes to leadership and some significant staffing turbulence over recent years.
- During the past year, declining pupil numbers have meant that teachers and leaders who have left the school have not been replaced. This includes the subject leaders of English and mathematics. In key stage 3, pupils are taught by teachers who are not specialists in the subject that they are teaching. Most teaching of the foundation subjects is being done by temporary teachers.

Information about this inspection

- During the first day of this inspection 15 out of 20 of the school's teaching staff reported in sick and were absent from school. Working with leaders and the multi-academy trust, inspectors altered the planned sequence of inspection activities and time was given for the school to adjust the timetable to ensure that lessons could be taught by E-ACT staff or leaders themselves. Consequently, during the first day of inspection, together with senior leaders, inspectors made short visits to only a very small number of lessons that leaders themselves had recommended.
- During the second day of the inspection only three teachers were absent, and a wider range of lesson visits were made. By the end of the inspection, visits had been made to 21 lessons to gather evidence to contribute to the evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning, and assessment. Approximately half of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leaders. To discuss the governance of the school, meetings were held with the chairman, chief executive officer and the regional education director of E-ACT. In addition, a meeting was held with representatives from the school's ambassadorial advisory group (AAG). Members of the AAG work closely with leaders and the trust's regional staff to support the school with communication, celebration, complaints and community aspects of school life.
- A wide range of school documentation was scrutinised, including that relating to policies, self-evaluation, safeguarding, pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance. Inspectors also considered a range of reports from the multi-academy trust's raising achievement board. The school's transition planning was also reviewed.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their learning and looked at their work across a range of subjects. They spoke to pupils around the school at lunchtime, breaks and during lessons. An inspector met with a group of pupils to gather their views.
- Inspectors considered feedback from 25 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including 19 free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the views represented in the school's own parental surveys and those expressed within nine replies to a staff survey.
- Inspectors reviewed the record of leaders' vetting and checks on the suitability of adults to work with pupils and spoke to staff and trustees about safeguarding procedures in the school.

Inspection team

Matthew Newberry, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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