

Benjamin Britten Academy of Music and Mathematics

Blyford Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR32 4PZ

Inspection dates

8–9 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headmaster's clear, unwavering vision focuses very effectively on supporting pupils' achievements, both in and out of the classroom. Staff implement the vision very well. As a result, the quality of education provided to pupils has improved significantly.
- Leadership is outstanding. Leaders know what they do well, but they concentrate their energies on what they could still do better. New leaders are very well supported. Consequently, the capacity of leaders to continue to improve the school is high.
- Governors have a clear and very accurate view of the school's strengths. They provide leaders with effective support and challenge that ensure that the school continues to improve at a rapid pace.
- Staff are proud to work at the school and are very grateful for the many training and development opportunities that are open to them. Staff morale is high.
- The overall progress that pupils make has improved considerably. In 2018, pupils' overall progress was in line with that of pupils with similar starting points nationally. Pupils make particularly strong progress in mathematics.
- Pupils are proud of their school and its ethos. They are welcoming, caring and respectful. Pupils behave well.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the school's curriculum is a key strength. Pupils have access to a very effective range of curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are well looked after and that they are kept safe. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Their additional funding is used effectively to ensure that they make strong and increasingly better progress.
- Although the pupil premium grant has been used to support significant improvements in pupils' progress, the impact of different initiatives is not reviewed closely enough.
- The overall quality of teaching is good, and teachers are well supported by the team of teaching assistants. However, teachers' whole-class questioning does not consistently deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Leaders' actions have improved pupils' progress in science. However, their progress in science is still not as strong as it is in other subjects. Progress in some technology subjects is not improving quickly enough.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that teachers' use of whole-class questioning is more effective in ascertaining, and responding to, what pupils know and understand.
- Ensure that high-quality teaching enables pupils to make progress in science and technology that is similar to that made in other subjects.
- Improve the rigour of pupil premium grant planning by including clear and measurable outcomes that enable leaders and governors to evaluate the impact of individual initiatives more effectively.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Leadership is outstanding. The headmaster and senior leaders have very high expectations of themselves, the school's staff and its pupils. Leaders focus relentlessly and successfully on raising pupils' expectations of themselves and providing them with a very wide range of activities, both in and outside of the classroom. Governors, teachers and other adults share this vision and they implement it in a consistent manner. As a result, the quality of education that pupils receive has improved rapidly and considerably.
- Staff morale is high. Middle leaders said they are valued, supported and trusted to make important decisions. Teachers and teaching assistants said that they are well looked-after and that leaders are very effective at taking their workload into account when making decisions. Trainee teachers, and those new to the profession, are particularly well supported. Staff said that communication in the school is excellent and that they receive high-quality training.
- A significant majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are supportive of the school and would recommend it to other parents. One parent, reflecting the views of others, wrote, 'A lot of positive changes have been implemented and success celebrated. Children feel valued and inspired to do well.' Another stated, 'My son's life is fulfilled in many ways, and every day is a good day.'
- Leaders know their school very well and they review its effectiveness routinely. They are accurate in their assessment of the school's strengths and in the identification of areas for development. Improvement plans include demanding and appropriate targets that leaders and governors review routinely. However, leaders are not content with the successes they have achieved. Instead, they continually and successfully strive to improve the school.
- Leaders are also very accurate in their evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching, learning and assessment. They use this evaluation to ensure that staff receive high-quality training that both develops their individual areas of need and supports whole-school goals. Staff, including trainee teachers, are particularly grateful for the high-quality professional development that they receive.
- Leaders have developed a challenging curriculum that deepens pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. There is a strong academic core at the centre of the curriculum. For example, leaders' development of the school's mathematics hub ensures that there is a high level of challenge in this area from the moment pupils join the school. The arts are valued highly. For example, all pupils in Year 7 participate in the school choir. Pupils said that they enjoy the subjects that they study. They appreciate the visits that they undertake and the interesting and very wide range of extra-curricular activities that are on offer. Leaders have appropriate and rigorous plans in place to ensure that pupils' progress in science is as strong it is in English and mathematics. As a consequence, pupils' progress is improving in this area, but more time is required for the impact of leaders' plans to be fully realised.
- Leaders are very effective in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are taught to understand and celebrate differences, to support

each other and to reflect on their own actions. They get involved in a wide range of fund-raising and charity work, and undertake a range of visits to places of cultural significance. Fundamental British values, such as democracy and the rule of law, are embedded within the school's culture.

- Leaders have a very clear understanding of the barriers to learning that are faced by pupils with SEND. They understand their needs, track their progress closely and provide them with additional support when needed. Leaders use the additional funding they receive to provide pupils with access to a wide range of support and to enable them to participate in additional educational activities. Literacy support in Year 7 is effective. By the end of the year the vast majority of identified pupils catch-up to where they should be. Support for the development of pupils' numeracy skills in Year 7 is well coordinated by the mathematics department.
- The pupil premium grant has been used very effectively to provide pupils with high-quality support, access to extra-curricular activities and additional tutoring. Leaders monitor the progress of this group of pupils particularly closely and modify the support offered to individual pupils as and when necessary. As a result of leaders' actions, there has been a significant improvement in the overall progress of this group of pupils. However, leaders' do not review the impact of individual actions closely enough in order to evaluate their effectiveness. It is not clear whether all initiatives have the same level of impact, or if some are more effective than others.

Governance of the school

- The board of trustees (who also operate as the school's governing body) have very effectively coordinated a period of rapid and transformational change, following the judgement that the predecessor school required special measures. They have ensured that the school has been well supported in terms of governance, school leadership, staff training and shared services.
- Governors know the school very well. They have an accurate understating of its strengths, but they also focus closely on its priorities for improvement. Governors are highly effective at holding leaders to account. They do this through challenging leaders at governing body meetings and when undertaking visits to the school.
- Governors ensure that their legal duties, especially in safeguarding pupils' welfare, are fully met. The link safeguarding governor checks safeguarding arrangements, including the record of pre-employment checks, routinely. Governors also undertake routine safeguarding audits. Governors receive valuable training that helps them to understand their responsibilities regarding keeping pupils safe.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff at all levels receive regular safeguarding training and they know how to identify pupils who are potentially at risk. Staff understand, and follow, leaders' clear procedures for the reporting of any safeguarding concerns.
- School leaders ensure that safeguarding concerns are logged effectively. Leaders are

tenacious in making sure that child-protection referrals are dealt with appropriately. The maintenance of child-protection files is effective, and leaders work well with representatives from other agencies to ensure that pupils quickly get the support they need.

- All required checks are carried out when recruiting new staff to work with pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The majority of parents who responded to Parent View agreed that pupils are taught well. Pupils who met with inspectors said that they enjoy their lessons and make good progress. The overwhelming majority of staff who completed the Ofsted staff questionnaire agreed that they are supported to take risks and innovate in ways that are right for the pupils.
- Teachers question individual pupils skilfully. They are effective in challenging pupils to explain their ideas, and they support them to think about problems in different ways. These well-structured discussions also allow teachers to provide pupils with specific guidance about what they need to do to improve their work.
- Good subject knowledge enables teachers to provide pupils with clear and precise explanations of important concepts. As a result, pupils develop key knowledge that they build upon over time. Pupils' acquisition of subject-specific vocabulary is strong across the school.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are a key strength of the school. Pupils are not afraid to get something wrong as they know doing so will help them to improve. Teachers know pupils, and their starting points, well. Learning activities are normally well focused on extending what pupils already know and understand.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support to pupils with SEND. They plan closely with teachers and they understand the needs of the pupils that they are supporting. Their effective questioning and explanation of tasks supports pupils with SEND to make strong and improving progress.
- Teachers' questioning of larger groups of pupils is less effective than when they work with pupils individually. They do not always use questioning rigorously enough to check the extent of pupils' knowledge and understanding before moving on to new tasks.
- While improving, teaching in science and some areas of technology is not as consistently strong as in other subjects. As a consequence, pupils make slower progress in these areas.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say that the school is a caring environment and that key values, such as respect and tolerance, are reinforced in lessons and around the school. They say that their views are taken seriously and that their feedback is acted upon. One pupil, reflecting

the views of others, stated, 'In this school, there is always a solution to an issue, or an answer to a question that you have.'

- Pupils' personal development is well supported by the very wide range of clubs and extra-curricular activities that they participate in. Pupils particularly value the opportunity to participate in national and international residential trips.
- Pupils are well looked after, and they are taught how to stay safe in a variety of situations. They said that they feel safe in school and that they have the confidence that staff will help them if they have a worry or a concern. Pupils also said that there is little bullying in the school. When it does happen, they said that it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Staff develop strong relationships with parents and they work effectively to support pupils and their families.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons. They quickly follow the instructions of their teachers and they work hard. There was little evidence of low-level disruption during the inspection. When it occurred, teachers dealt with it effectively.
- Pupils move around the school in an orderly and respectful manner. They congregate in small social groups both within the school grounds and inside the buildings at both break and lunchtime. They are friendly and welcoming to visitors.
- Punctuality, both at the beginning of the day and throughout it, is good.
- Leaders have robust procedures in place to support pupils' attendance. Pupils' rates of attendance are in line with national averages.
- The numbers of pupils receiving fixed-period exclusions is above average but is reducing year on year.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils typically start Year 7 with levels of prior attainment that are broadly average. Their rates of progress have increased substantially in recent years. This is because of the marked improvements to leadership, teaching, and pupils' attitudes to learning.
- In 2018, pupils' overall progress was in line with that of pupils with similar starting points nationally. This was a significant improvement from the previous year. Their progress in English was also in line with that of pupils with similar starting points nationally, while their progress in mathematics was significantly better. Current pupils' overall progress (and their progress in English and mathematics) continues to be strong.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils has improved substantially from 2017. In 2018, this group of pupils made progress in line with pupils with similar starting points nationally. Disadvantaged pupils currently in the school continue to make good progress.
- Similar, significant improvements in progress are evident in the work of pupils with SEND. The differences between their progress and that of those with similar starting

points are diminishing rapidly. Pupils with SEND make strong overall progress against the broader targets in their individual plans.

- Middle-attaining pupils make good progress, while pupils with lower prior attainment make progress in line with pupils with similar starting points nationally. Most-able pupils' progress in 2018 was weaker than that of their peers, but the current cohort of most-able pupils are making improved progress.
- Pupils now get off to a quick start to their learning in key stage 3. In English and mathematics, pupils are building firm foundations in the knowledge, understanding and skills that they apply across the curriculum.
- Progress in science is improving, but it is not as strong as in English and mathematics. Pupils' progress in some technology subjects is not improving quickly enough because the quality of teaching is still too inconsistent in that area.
- Careers information, advice and guidance is highly effective in supporting pupils to have high aspirations and to be well prepared for the next stages of their lives. Pupils are provided with a range of independent advice, both in lessons and during specially organised events. Few pupils leave the school without a position in education, employment or training.

School details

Unique reference number	142759
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10088627

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	802
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Marion Ravehill
Headmaster	James McAtear
Telephone number	01502 582312
Website	www.benjaminbritten.school
Email address	office@benjaminbritten.school
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is the school's first inspection since it joined the Hartismere Family of Schools in May 2016.
- Responsibility for the school's performance lies with the Hartismere Family of Schools trust board. The trust board currently acts as the school's local governing body. The trust has longer-term plans to establish local representation at the school through the establishment of new local governing body. There are currently four schools within the trust.
- The school is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils who receive SEN support is above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium or who have an education, health and care plan is average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The school does not use alternative education providers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the headmaster, senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, members of the governing body and trustees.
- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Inspectors observed learning in 42 lessons, or parts of lessons.
- A wide range of pupils' workbooks were looked at by inspectors throughout the inspection to assess both the quality of teaching and pupils' progress over time.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils informally in class and around the school at break and lunchtimes to seek their views about the school.
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils more formally to discuss many aspects of school life.
- Inspectors observed an assembly and made visits to morning registration sessions.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's website and a range of documents, including assessment information and the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness. Inspectors also scrutinised leaders' improvement plans and their records about behaviour, safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the 65 responses and 41 free-text comments made by parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also considered the 70 responses by staff to the Ofsted staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Daniel Gee, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Lynn Ayling	Ofsted Inspector
Jenny Carpenter	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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