

Inspection of The Basildon Upper Academy

Wickford Avenue, Pitsea, Basildon, Essex SS13 3HL

Inspection dates:

23–24 October 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Basildon Upper Academy looks after its pupils and knows them well. Pupils say that they feel safe and they are taught to make safe choices. Senior leaders have thought carefully about how they help and encourage pupils to get the most out of school. Pupils appreciate the efforts staff make for them and proudly say, 'They are really there for you.' Pupils' relationships with teachers are positive.

The school's leaders, teachers and support staff have high expectations for every pupil. They work well together to provide pupils with opportunities which they might not experience outside of school. Teachers expect pupils to behave well in lessons and in their free time, and most pupils do. The school does not tolerate bullying and deals firmly with pupils on the rare occasions that it occurs.

Leaders are clear about what they want pupils to learn and how they can learn. Some subjects are further ahead than others at this stage in making sure that this happens.

Students in the sixth form are happy and are prepared well for their next steps when they leave the school. They have a broad choice of subjects to choose from.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The quality of education pupils receive is variable. Senior leaders have worked well with subject leaders to produce plans for what pupils should learn. Some of these plans are better than others. The better plans have been written to help pupils develop their skills and improve their understanding of the subject. The plans for English are carefully written and teachers use these well. They think carefully about the order in which they teach things so that pupils can remember more and make progress. Pupils make similarly effective progress in business and enterprise and in engineering. Teachers of these subjects regularly check that pupils understand what they are learning.

In some subjects, although the plans are in place, not all teachers make sure that pupils are learning things in the right order or are learning enough. Inspectors discovered this when they spoke to pupils and looked at the work in their books. Some work teachers give to pupils is not challenging enough. This means that some pupils do not achieve as well as they should. The planning for mathematics is not as effective as it is for some of the other subjects.

Leaders support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities well. Teachers understand their needs and make good use of adults in the classroom to support these pupils.

Governors have realised that the extra funding received for supporting disadvantaged pupils was not making enough difference. They have reviewed their plans to help these pupils achieve better. How well pupils who speak English as a second language achieve depends on their level of English and how much of the

work they understand. Support for pupils who speak limited English when they arrive at the school could be better.

School leaders, including governors, share a commitment to give pupils an effective education. They understand the challenges this involves but are determined to make the school a highly effective one. They try hard to involve parents in this challenge, but some parents do not work as closely with the school as leaders would wish.

The school has effective systems in place to encourage pupils to behave in lessons. Pupils understand the procedures and respond well to their teachers' warnings. The few pupils who do not meet their teachers' expectations are sent to the 'return to learn' room. In this room, the staff encourage them to reflect about their behaviour so that it improves before they return to their lessons.

Leaders give clear messages to pupils about the importance of attending school regularly and this is having a positive impact. A few pupils, however, do not attend school as often as they should. Leaders are committed to developing pupils' confidence and belief in themselves. Enrichment activities at the end of the day contribute to this. The clear message to pupils is that anything is possible if you persevere.

Students in the sixth form receive high-quality guidance and support when making their choices. Leaders are committed to admitting students who might not gain a place elsewhere. Teachers carefully consider what they want students to learn and encourage them to work independently. Staff encourage students to become responsible and active members of the school and the wider community. They contribute well towards the running of the school and their voice is listened to by staff. For example, students have actively campaigned to keep the local library open. They leave school well prepared for whatever they choose to do next.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of vigilance in the school. Leaders know what to do if they are concerned about pupils at risk, such as from radicalisation or 'county lines'. Leaders carry out the required employment checks on all adults who work with children at the school. All staff receive regular training in safeguarding when joining the school. Heads of year groups work closely with pupils and families, providing ongoing support for those pupils who need it the most. Leaders check that pupils in alternative provision are kept safe and attend regularly.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Most subject leaders have a clear vision and an appropriate plan for what they want pupils to learn in their subject. However, mathematics is not as well ahead

as some of the other subjects. The school needs to ensure that the implementation of these curriculum plans and the impact they have is more clearly demonstrated through greater consistency in the quality of teaching and continued improvement in pupils' outcomes.

- Some work expected of pupils is not demanding enough. Teachers need to give pupils work that is challenging and logically sequenced.
- The arrangements in place for pupils who arrive at the school with little or no English are currently unsuitable and should be reviewed. Teachers have been provided with some training on this but some pupils are still unable to understand what they are being taught. There is no designated member of staff to oversee these pupils to ensure that they gain the necessary skills in English in order for them to access the curriculum they are following. The school needs to investigate how it can help these pupils to develop their spoken English.
- Leaders need to explore ways in which they can work more closely in partnership with parents.
- The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is too high. Although the school has had success in reducing the numbers of pupils who are persistently absent, they need to maintain this focus so that the downward trend continues.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	135897
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10088722
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	14 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	499
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	165
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Leslie Livermore
Headteacher	Gary Smith
Website	www.basildonacademies.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 November 2015

Information about this school

- Basildon Upper Academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. Along with the Basildon Lower Academy, it forms the Basildon Academies Trust.
- Both the Lower Academy and the Upper Academy have the same headteacher.
- Most pupils are of white British heritage. The school is admitting an increasing number of pupils of white European heritage and pupils who do not speak English as their first language.
- Over half of the pupils in the school are eligible for pupil premium funding.
- A small number of pupils attend The Children's Support Service (CSS), which is an alternative provider based in Basildon. Additionally, the Upper Academy teaches a small number of pupils from the Lower Academy.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, the chair of the governing body, six subject leaders and groups of pupils. We also made a telephone call to the alternative provider the school uses.
- We looked at English, mathematics, science, geography, engineering and business studies. We met with the subject leaders and teachers, visited lessons and looked at pupils' books. We looked at the school's plans for teaching these subjects.
- One inspector met with the person in charge of safeguarding to discuss how the school makes sure that pupils are kept safe. The inspector looked at the school's systems for employing members of staff and recording any concerns they have about pupils.
- We also looked at the school's information on behaviour and attendance and other documents the school's leaders made available to us.
- We considered five free-text responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 30 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

John Daniell, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Diana Osagie	Ofsted Inspector
Russell Ayling	Ofsted Inspector

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