

# Inspection of The Brunel Academy

170b Torquay Road, Paignton, Devon TQ3 2AL

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Inspection dates: 4–5 February 2020

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Staff and pupils have good relationships. Pupils say that they feel safe in the school, and there are adults they can talk to. Bullying happens sometimes, but pupils say staff deal with it effectively.

Pupils can get frustrated. When this occurs, staff help pupils to calm down. Staff spend time helping pupils understand and manage their frustrations. Events outside the school cause tensions between pupils. Again, staff help sort out any issues. However, too often, poor behaviour results in fixed-term exclusions. This prevents pupils from engaging with their education.

Reading is not developed well enough in the school. Pupils have too few opportunities to read outside of English lessons. This inhibits pupils' motivation to read.

Pupils enjoy the wide range of activities on offer, for example taking part in the Ten Tors challenge. These activities give pupils experiences that they would not otherwise have. This helps pupils build self-confidence and resilience.

Leaders use a range of strategies to encourage pupils to attend the school. These work for some pupils. However, not all pupils attend the school regularly enough. This hampers their progress.

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

The headteacher and staff share a commitment to provide pupils with an opportunity to be successful. Most pupils arrive at the school with negative experiences of education. Many pupils have complex needs. As a result, they exhibit challenging behaviour. Staff take time to get to know each pupil. Building strong relationships with pupils and gaining their trust are paramount.

High rates of absence for many pupils limits their engagement with the curriculum. Leaders use an extensive range of strategies to address poor attendance. Despite this, absence is too high for too many pupils. Disruptive behaviour is also a barrier for some pupils. It prevents pupils from reaching their full potential. Where staff have strong relationships with pupils and a clear understanding of their needs, engagement in lessons is high.

Some pupils come to the school with poor reading skills. For these pupils there is a well-organised literacy intervention programme in place. This helps pupils to improve their reading and build confidence. However, for other pupils, there are not enough opportunities to read outside of English lessons. Reading is not promoted effectively.

Leaders are aware of the need to improve some staff's understanding of pupils' needs and their response to challenging behaviour. To address this, leaders have introduced a new approach to assessing pupils' emotional health and well-being. All staff are now trained in using this approach. Staff are now assessing pupils' emotional needs using the new system. It is too early to measure the impact of this work. However, figures for attendance and behaviour have recently started to show signs of improvement.

Leaders have successfully established a well-planned curriculum. It is carefully designed to meet the needs of pupils. Key learning goals are identified in each subject. Curriculum plans allow for these to be revisited to help pupils remember what they have learned. Leaders have recently extended the curriculum. The Arts Award and a wider range of GCSE qualifications are now available to pupils.

Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. There is a wide range of enrichment activities to support pupils' development. Pupils are aware of the importance of respecting different groups of people. The school provides a comprehensive careers programme. Pupils visit different workplaces and meet potential training providers and employers. There are also many opportunities to take part in work experience activities.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They feel valued by leaders and are proud to be part of the school. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and what needs to improve. School leaders work closely with local authority officers to ensure that the school can meet the needs of pupils.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. Leaders have established effective safeguarding procedures. Leaders diligently carry out the required pre-employment checks. Staff understand their responsibilities. They use the school's system for recording concerns. Close liaison with families and other agencies helps keep pupils safe.

Pupils learn about potential risks and how to manage them as part of the school's curriculum. Pupils feel safe and they know that they can speak to any of the staff if they have concerns. Governors maintain close oversight of safeguarding.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Too many pupils do not attend the school regularly enough. These pupils miss too many lessons and do not reach their full potential. Leaders should continue to work with pupils and parents and carers to improve attendance further.

- There are times when events outside of the school create tensions in the school. This can result in conflict between pupils in the school, which disrupts learning. Leaders need to ensure that there is a consistent approach to support pupils to improve their behaviour.
- The work to support pupils who require help with reading is effective. However, the work to encourage all pupils to read is not. This limits pupils' motivation to read. Leaders should take action to introduce opportunities for pupils to read for pleasure. This will increase pupils' confidence in reading and enable pupils to access the curriculum.

## 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 are the school and you are 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	143552
<b>Local authority</b>	Torbay
<b>Inspection number</b>	10122322
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	56
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Jane Reed
<b>Headteacher</b>	Matt Caunter
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.catch-22.org.uk/services/the-brunel-academy">www.catch-22.org.uk/services/the-brunel-academy</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school opened as an academy in April 2017. It is part of the Catch 22 multi-academy trust.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. All pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school uses five alternative providers. These are Play Torbay, South Devon College, YMCA, On Track and SWIS.

## Information about this inspection

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

- We met with the headteacher, senior leaders, curriculum leaders and teachers. The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body and three other governors. The lead inspector also met with the executive principal from Catch 22 and spoke on the phone to a representative from the local authority.
- We observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around the school. We spoke to pupils about bullying, behaviour and leaders' expectations of pupils.

- We scrutinised the school’s policies relating to safeguarding, spoke with the designated safeguarding leader and considered records of the pre-employment suitability checks the school makes on its staff. Inspectors asked pupils for their opinions about safety, behaviour and bullying.
- Responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire, were minimal. Therefore, inspectors considered the 14 responses to a recent parent survey carried out by the school.
- Inspectors undertook deep dives into the following subjects: mathematics, English, and personal, social and health education. This involved meeting with subject leaders, visits to lessons in these subjects, work scrutiny, and discussion with teachers and pupils from the lessons visited.

### **Inspection team**

Mark Burgess, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Paula Marsh

Ofsted Inspector

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