

Inspection of The Brunts Academy

The Park, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG18 2AT

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils do not get a good deal at this school. Leaders' expectations are not high enough. Pupils do not achieve at the levels of which they are capable. Disadvantaged pupils are not successful. These pupils do not attend school as often as they should.

Some pupils feel unsafe. They are concerned about the disrespectful behaviour of others. Pupils experience swearing and derogatory language, including sexualised and homophobic language. They say this has become normalised. Pupils do not always report their concerns to staff. They lack confidence that staff will resolve issues, including about bullying. Some pupils do not enjoy school as much as they should. Many pupils express unhappiness about access to, and the condition of, the school's toilet facilities.

Pupils study a broad range of subjects at key stages 3 and 5. However, the curriculum in key stage 4 is narrow for pupils in Year 11. It does not meet these pupils' needs or aspirations. Leaders have not acted quickly enough in response to the frustrations of pupils, parents and carers, to improve the curriculum offer for these pupils.

Pupils are not well prepared for life in modern Britain. The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) is not well planned or delivered. Support for pupils' next steps into education, employment or training is stronger.

Students in the sixth form enjoy a more positive experience. They value their education and their teachers' support. Most students achieve well.

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

The school has a legacy of under resourcing and instability. Trust leaders have not ensured that disadvantaged pupils have benefited fully from all of the additional government funding intended to support them. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have not received all the support they are entitled to. Some of these pupils do not study the same curriculum as their peers. The key stage 4 curriculum for all pupils is narrower than it should be in Year 11. However, current leaders have addressed this issue for pupils who have started their key-stage-4 courses in Year 10.

Current school and trust leaders have stabilised the school following a turbulent period of high staff turnover. They have restored staff's morale. The interim board of trustees has reinstated levels of funding to what they should be. While leaders recognise the weaknesses in the school, they have not addressed many of them effectively. Their own evaluation of the school is too generous.

Leaders have used external support to help them establish a new curriculum vision. They have not had sufficient time to ensure that the curriculum in each subject is of a good quality. Subject leaders are at the early stages of planning the curriculum. They are deciding what pupils should learn in each subject and how they can build on this knowledge. Some subjects, for example design and technology, are planned more effectively than others. Subject leaders are benefiting from advice from the multi-academy trust that is supporting the school.

Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and most use this to present new ideas clearly. However, in many subjects, teachers do not identify misconceptions swiftly. Pupils' misunderstandings are not corrected. Teachers often move learning on too quickly. They do not check that pupils have understood new concepts fully. As a result, some pupils often leave work incomplete.

Many pupils work hard and want to do well. However, some pupils' poor behaviour has a negative impact on the quality of other pupils' learning. Staff do not use the school's behaviour policy consistently to challenge poor behaviour. Pupils are not supported to improve their behaviour effectively. Levels of truancy from lessons are high.

Leaders are in the early stages of planning support for pupils who need help with their reading. These pupils are not getting the help they need currently. The school does not promote a culture of reading well enough. The library is not open for pupils to use. Pupils who speak English as an additional language do not receive the extra support they need.

Pupils' personal development is poorly promoted. Leaders have only recently begun to plan a coherent curriculum for PSHE education. Pupils struggle to recall what they have learned previously. They have a limited understanding of British values, protected characteristics and different cultures. They do not understand how to keep themselves safe well enough.

Most students enjoy their time in the sixth form. They feel safe and well cared for. These students can opt to study courses from a broad range of subjects. Students are well supported towards their next steps in education, employment or training. They benefit from some opportunities to learn about mental health, personal finance and volunteering. Leaders do not intervene quickly enough to help ensure that some students, in some subjects, stay on track and achieve as well as they can.

Teachers who have joined the profession recently feel well supported. They are keen to remain at the school to develop their careers, albeit in difficult circumstances.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Some pupils do not feel safe because of the intimidating behaviour of others. Staff do not always intervene to challenge this poor behaviour.

Leaders do not ensure that staff record their actions to protect vulnerable children well. Leaders do not implement, or check, plans to protect pupils who have experienced harmful sexual behaviour.

Leaders do not complete safeguarding checks for all pupils attending alternative provision. Leaders cannot be sure that these pupils are all safe and well.

Leaders work well with external agencies, including social care and the police. They take timely and appropriate action to protect pupils who are at risk of immediate harm.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's arrangements for safeguarding are not effective. Leaders have not been vigilant when checking the safety and well-being of pupils who have experienced harm, including from harmful sexual behaviour. Leaders must ensure that pupils at risk are appropriately supported. They should ensure that all safeguarding records are centralised, in accordance with the school's policy. They should use information from these records to inform the personal development programme.
- Leaders have not made the required checks to assure themselves that pupils attending alternative education provision are safe and well. The systems in place to contact alternative providers are not applied consistently, including checking the attendance of these pupils. Leaders cannot be fully sure of pupils' safety and well-being. Leaders must ensure that they monitor closely the attendance and well-being of all pupils who attend alternative provision.
- The school's curriculum is not sufficiently and coherently planned in all subjects. Pupils are unable to build on their knowledge as they move through the school. They do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is well planned and sequenced across all subjects.
- Teachers often move on to new content before ensuring that all pupils have fully understood what has been taught. Too many pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, leave work unfinished or opt out of completing tasks. Pupils have gaps in their knowledge. Leaders should make sure that teachers have the knowledge and skills they need to be able to teach the curriculum effectively.

- Weak readers are not supported well enough to improve their reading. They get left behind and find it hard to catch up. Leaders must make sure that these pupils get the help they need to become confident and fluent readers.
- Leaders ensure that information about pupils with SEND is shared with staff. However, they do not check that staff use this information to ensure that the curriculum meets these pupils' needs. Some pupils with SEND are not able to learn the same curriculum as their peers. Leaders must ensure that all staff know how to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. They should ensure that all pupils can access the curriculum.
- In the past, disadvantaged pupils have not benefited fully from the pupil premium funding provided to support them. These pupils are not supported well academically. They underachieve significantly. Leaders must develop a robust strategy to support these pupils, so that these pupils realise their aspirations and achieve well.
- Expectations of pupils' behaviour are not high enough. Staff do not routinely challenge poor behaviour. Low-level disruption and pupils' use of poor language has become normalised. Some pupils feel they may come to harm because of the intimidating behaviour of others. Leaders should ensure that all staff uphold high expectations of behaviour. They should ensure that staff tackle challenging behaviour effectively, so that all pupils feel safe and can enjoy school.
- Vulnerable pupils are absent from school more often than their peers. These pupils develop gaps in their learning and struggle to catch up. Leaders should implement their plans to achieve higher levels of attendance from these pupils.
- Pupils' personal development is not promoted well. Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum for PSHE is of a good enough quality. Pupils are unprepared for life in modern Britain. Leaders should ensure that all pupils receive the knowledge they need to make positive life choices and to keep themselves safe.
- Having considered the evidence, I recommend that leaders and those responsible for governance may appoint early career teachers.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

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	137763
Local authority	Nottinghamshire County Council
Inspection number	10241635
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1474
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	316
Appropriate authority	The Evolve Trust
Chair of trust	Andrew Child
Principal	Carl Atkin
Website	www.brunts.evolutrust.org
Date of previous inspection	22 March 2017

Information about this school

- The school is part of The Evolve Trust.
- Since January 2022, the school has been governed by an interim board of trustees following a decision to close The Evolve Trust. The role of the interim board is solely to oversee the closure of the Evolve Trust. The school is due to move to a new trust in December 2022. The new trust has been supporting the school during this time.
- The school uses two registered and six unregistered providers for alternative education provision for a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide students in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His 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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the principal and other members of the senior leadership team, including leaders of the sixth form and leaders for the provision of pupils with SEND.
- A meeting was held with two members of the interim board of trustees, including the chair. A further discussion was held with the interim chief executive officer of The Evolve Trust and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust supporting the school currently.
- To check the school's arrangements for safeguarding, the lead inspector met with safeguarding leaders. Policies, procedures and record-keeping were scrutinised, including the checks made for the recruitment of staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, computing, history and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke to many pupils, across all key stages, formally and informally around the school site.
- An inspector spoke on the telephone with representatives of six of the alternative providers used by the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation, including policies and record-keeping for behaviour management, attendance and the oversight of pupils attending alternative education provision. The lead inspector also reviewed leaders' self-evaluation and school improvement planning.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's survey, Parent View. They also considered the responses submitted to Ofsted's surveys for staff and for pupils.

Inspection team

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