

Inspection of a good school: Belfairs Academy

Highlands Boulevard, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 3TG

Inspection dates:

17 and 18 May 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils who attend Belfairs Academy benefit from a provision that goes beyond the academic. They are spoiled for choice in the broad range of clubs that are on offer. Pupils enthusiastically take up new interests, such as anime, coding, eco activities and drumming.

Pupils know that teachers have high expectations of what they can achieve. Pupils understand they need to work hard in lessons if they want to succeed. Most pupils produce high-quality work and achieve well. However, some pupils do not concentrate well and disengage from their learning. Some staff do not challenge this quickly enough. This results in other pupils being disrupted and finding it difficult to learn.

The school is a large and busy environment. While most pupils move around calmly, some are less considerate of others. At times, a small number of pupils can become boisterous. This behaviour results in some younger pupils feeling insecure and worried.

Pupils and sixth-form students are proud to make a positive contribution to their community. They determine which local charities they want to support. They discuss and decide on which they will raise money for. Recently, pupils have raised funds for the air ambulance and a charity that helps the homeless. They have also raised money to help support families who suffer the bereavement of babies and young children.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that is high in ambition for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils have a wide range of subjects to choose from when selecting GCSE options. Leaders have decided to condense

key stage 3 into two years. However, they have ensured that pupils maintain access to a broad curriculum, including through opportunities for pupils to learn about subjects through the enrichment curriculum. Pupils benefit from these experiences.

Leaders understand the importance of reading. They know that to access the curriculum pupils need to be confident and fluent readers. Most pupils read well. For those who struggle with reading, leaders have implemented effective interventions. These well-planned actions help pupils read confidently and fluently.

Subject specialists have set out exactly what pupils need to know and when. Teachers use this information well. They use their expert knowledge to craft well-considered explanations of sometimes difficult concepts. They use their passion about their subjects to enthuse pupils about what they are learning. Teachers skilfully assess pupils' understanding before moving on. They find out what pupils have and have not learned and understood. They adjust how they teach to give extra help to pupils who need it. For example, they find different ways to explain things, or provide more concrete examples. These adaptations successfully support pupils to progress as intended.

Sixth-form students benefit from teachers' expertise to gain a deep and rich understanding of the subjects they study. This in turn helps them to use and apply this knowledge to complex and varied situations.

Leaders have a clear understanding of how to support pupils with SEND. Leaders work in a challenging local context to secure external support where appropriate. Training supports teachers to make suitable adjustments for pupils with SEND in the classroom. These adjustments are successful in helping pupils make progress.

Leaders have high expectations of how pupils should behave. Leaders have clearly set out how staff should apply the agreed procedures to support pupils to meet these expectations. Many pupils behave well. Generally, lessons proceed without interruption and pupils engage in the learning activities. However, not all staff apply the behaviour management procedures consistently. This results in off-task behaviour not being challenged. At times, this escalates to become disruptive behaviour which interrupts the learning of others. Teachers' expectations of behaviour around school are also inconsistent. This results in, at times, disorderly conduct in corridors.

Pupils are well prepared for life beyond school. Leaders have carefully constructed a personal social and health education (PSHE) programme. This is delivered from Years 7 to 13 by experts. The programme builds and layers an ever more complex understanding of what is needed to be a positive contributor to society. Pupils understand British values. They understand, respect and celebrate differences.

Leaders understand the importance of a well-motivated staff. Leaders consult with teachers when constructing the calendar of events and tasks to spread workload evenly. A well-being group provides support to all staff. Staff generally value this group's work and the conduit it provides about their welfare to leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained and know how to identify the signs that pupils might be at risk. If staff have concerns, they report them immediately to leaders. Leaders respond swiftly and work with families and agencies to secure the help pupils need.

Leaders have not ensured that safeguarding records are maintained to ensure that all details, actions and outcomes are available to staff who need access. Some records have gaps where information has not been logged. These minor weaknesses have not placed pupils at risk. However, they increase the risk of important information or actions being missed. This can negatively impact the quality and appropriateness of the support that pupils and their families access.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not ensured that the safeguarding records for pupils are maintained as accurately and efficiently as they need to be. Important actions or communications are not available to all relevant staff. This means that the support pupils access is not understood or reviewed effectively by those who need to know. Leaders should ensure that all safeguarding records are maintained accurately and in one place. Governors and directors should oversee the robust monitoring of these records.
- Some teachers do not expect pupils to meet the high expectations of behaviour that leaders have set. Not all staff apply the agreed systems to manage behaviour consistently. This means some pupils do not behave as well as they should, while others feel unfairly treated. Leaders should ensure that all staff understand and meet leaders' high expectations. Leaders should ensure that all staff apply the agreed procedures for managing pupils' behaviour consistently, in the classroom and around the school.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually, this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2013.

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	138174
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	10211032
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
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	1,449
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	182
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Adam Tregoning
Principal	Beverley Williams
Website	www.belfairsacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Legra Academy Trust; it has been part of the trust since 2015.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, including the principal, vice principal, assistant principals, special educational needs coordinator, members of the local academy board and a member of the trust board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, art and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, to some pupils about their learning and looked at pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the lead inspector met with leaders responsible for safeguarding and the human resources manager. The lead inspector scrutinised the school's single central record of recruitment and vetting checks and looked at how records relating to safeguarding are recorded and maintained. To further evaluate safeguarding, inspectors also spoke with pupils, staff and governors and reviewed surveys.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss SEND provision, behaviour and attendance, careers information and guidance and pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors met with pupil groups to discuss behaviour, bullying and pupils' wider development.
- The lead inspector reviewed the 322 responses and 195 free text responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. In addition, the lead inspector reviewed one letter and three emails sent to the inspection team. The lead inspector also reviewed the 200 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and 77 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

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