

Inspection of The Basildon Lower Academy

Timberlog Close, Timberlog Lane, Basildon, Essex SS14 1UX

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 March 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and feel safe at school. They say that incidents of bullying are rare and if bullying happens at school, teachers and other staff will help them resolve it. While most pupils exhibit positive behaviour, a significant number of pupils do not behave well enough.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils and have made improvements to the curriculum. However, the quality of education that pupils receive is varied across subjects and within subjects. Where teachers have high expectations of pupils and know their subject well pupils have a better experience.

Pupils benefit from a range of leadership opportunities at the school, such as the chance to become respect and attendance ambassadors. They have created their own student values, which pupils are proud of and try to demonstrate. Pupils feel this is an inclusive school where people from different backgrounds are welcomed into the school community.

The school has a wide offer of clubs and extra-curricular activities. These include the school choir, board game clubs and a range of sports activities. Pupils are positive about the opportunities the school makes available to them, including a comprehensive before- and after-school provision.

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

Leaders have developed a broad curriculum. Pupils now study a wider range of subjects than they did before, such as French and music. These changes better prepare pupils to go on to study subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate.

Planning is clear in subjects across the school. However, not all staff understand how and why the curriculum has been organised to build on what pupils have already learned. Consequently, pupils do not always learn what leaders had intended and develop gaps in their knowledge.

In most instances, teachers use assessment appropriately to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and use information to make adaptations to their teaching. In a very small number of subjects, assessment focuses too quickly on GCSE examination style questions before pupils have the knowledge to answer them well.

Leaders have designed an effective approach to teach reading. Pupils benefit from dedicated reading lessons, where they read plays and novels with enthusiasm. Pupils who struggle to read are helped to become better readers through additional support. Leaders have given reading a high priority in the school and have created libraries in each block to ensure that pupils can easily access high-quality texts.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported to help them keep up with their peers. Leaders have carefully considered the needs of pupils with SEND and have designed effective support strategies for teachers and other staff to use in lessons.

Leaders have improved processes and approaches to manage pupils' behaviour. Where these are used well, they are helping pupils to behave positively. However, in too many areas, staff do not have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and do not follow the school behaviour policy. This means some pupils' poor behaviour disrupts the learning of others.

Leaders have created a varied curriculum to promote pupils' personal development. This includes dedicated personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lessons, daily enrichment activities and weekly focuses, such as 'job of the week'. This prepares pupils well for life beyond school, including building their knowledge of careers. Leaders have developed a well-being centre to help pupils with their mental and physical health. Pupils see this as a unique aspect of the school and are positive about the help they receive there.

Leaders, including trustees, have a shared ambition to improve the school. This ambition has widened the curriculum offer and helped improve processes for monitoring behaviour and attendance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils know there is an adult they can speak to if they have concerns. They learn how to keep safe in person and online through the PSHE curriculum and some enrichment activities.

Staff are well trained to identify and report safeguarding concerns. Leaders carry out checks on adults who work at the school and manage allegations made about staff appropriately.

Leaders respond to safeguarding concerns quickly and take appropriate actions, including referrals to outside agencies. However, leaders do not record the steps they have taken to safeguard pupils in a consistent way. This makes it difficult to review and establish which actions were taken and why.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is too much variation in how the curriculum is taught within and across subjects. This is because some teachers do not effectively build on what pupils already know or emphasise new knowledge appropriately. As a result, pupils do

not learn as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that staff are helped to teach the planned curriculum well.

- Teachers do not always have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and do not implement the school's behaviour policy consistently. This means that the poor behaviour of some pupils is not always challenged. This disrupts the learning of others. Leaders should reinforce their expectations of behaviour and ensure that the behaviour policy is used consistently.
- While safeguarding is effective, leaders do not record the actions they take to keep pupils safe in a consistent way. This makes it difficult for leaders to have full oversight of safeguarding concerns or to review these concerns quickly. Leaders should review their procedures for recording safeguarding concerns and the actions taken in addressing them.

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	135895
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10240987
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	935
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Nick Luckock
Headteacher	April Gurney
Website	www.basildonacademies.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 and 24 October 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher and several other staff work across the Basildon Lower Academy and the Basildon Upper Academy. Together, both schools form the Basildon Academies Trust.
- The school currently uses two registered alternative providers.
- 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

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

- 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 spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and other members of staff. The lead inspector also spoke with the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Basildon Academies Trust.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in these subjects: English, geography, science, physical education, modern foreign languages, and music. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, which included leaders' self-evaluation, records for behaviour and attendance and minutes from meetings of trustees.
- Inspectors considered 23 responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 21 written responses from parents. They considered survey responses from 76 pupils and 35 members of staff.

Inspection team

Marc White, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Garry Trott	Ofsted Inspector
Sufian Sadiq	Ofsted Inspector
Diana Fletcher	Ofsted Inspector

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