

Inspection of Notley High School and Braintree Sixth Form

Notley Road, Braintree, Essex CM7 1WY

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 July 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

Many pupils benefit from leaders' high expectations of what they should achieve. In many cases, pupils achieve well. They talk confidently about their learning, and they are proud of what they can do. However, there are inconsistencies in how well the curriculum is delivered. In too many cases, pupils are not producing work that is of high enough quality.

Most pupils are happy at school. Pupils recognise that their school is improving. In numerous lessons, they behave well. When this happens, pupils can concentrate and learn. However, this is not always the case. A minority of pupils regularly disrupt learning. This causes distractions and pupils cannot get on with their work.

During social times, pupils enjoy meeting with their friends and having fun. Pupils are safe. Some pupils' behaviour is too boisterous and rough. This makes other pupils feel uncomfortable in certain places such as some corridors and the lunch queue.

Pupils learn about tolerance and differences. Pupils show high levels of respect for other races and religions. However, some pupils report that offensive name-calling, particularly about appearance and sexuality, is common. While many pupils are confident in reporting this behaviour, not all pupils would tell an adult. They are not confident that doing so would improve the situation.

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

Leaders have introduced an ambitious curriculum across the school, including in the sixth form. They have planned carefully what content should be taught and when. Leaders review the curriculum regularly to continue to improve the quality of provision for pupils.

In many subjects and many year groups, teachers deliver the curriculum effectively. They have a good understanding of pupils' subject knowledge. They use this information to adapt their teaching to make sure all pupils learn well. In these instances, teachers check carefully that pupils know and understand what has been taught. For example, during an English lesson the teacher provided detailed steps demonstrating how pupils could improve their work. Pupils applied this clear guidance to complete their work in a new context. As a contrast, there are occasions where teachers do not check what pupils know and can do. They do not adapt their lessons to meet all pupils' needs. This means that some pupils do not achieve as highly as they should. These inconsistencies do not exist in the sixth form, where students benefit from consistently high-quality teaching and support.

Leaders accurately identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders make good use of the specialist resource provision to provide appropriate support for pupils who need it. They produce clear plans for adults to

use that help pupils with SEND to access the curriculum. Many teachers use these plans well. They make well-considered adaptations to their teaching. However, there is inconsistency in how well these plans are used. This variability means that some pupils with SEND are not always supported to achieve as well as they should.

Adults are precise in identifying pupils who need help with their reading. Clear systems are in place which identify and target pupils' specific reading needs. Leaders make sure that staff are well trained to provide the right help for pupils who find reading tricky. This enables pupils to develop their skill and confidence in reading.

Leaders have systems in place to support pupils to behave well. In many cases, adults follow these systems, and their expectations are consistently high. Many lessons are calm and orderly. Pupils focus on their learning. This is not always the case. Disruption to lessons is too common because some adults do not apply the behaviour policy consistently. Too often pupils display apathy towards their learning. Pupils are not consistently supported to concentrate on their learning, nor complete their work to a high standard.

In the sixth form, behaviour is consistently good. Students have high levels of resilience towards their learning. The environment is inclusive and welcoming. Students are confident to be themselves and are well supported by staff.

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, benefit from a well-planned personal development programme. Leaders ensure that pupils receive independent careers information and are well prepared for their next stage in education or training. They benefit from a variety of activities which enhance their understanding of the curriculum. For example, students spoke positively about a recent trip to the Old Bailey.

The trust, and others responsible for governance, effectively supports leaders to improve the quality of provision. Staff are positive about the school. They appreciate how leaders support their workload and well-being. Many parents would recommend the school to others.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are trained and confident in recognising and reporting any concerns about pupils' welfare. Safeguarding leaders act in a timely manner to ensure pupils receive help if they need it. This may involve school support, such as through the pastoral team, support groups or the school counsellor. It may also involve support from external agencies.

Leaders maintain accurate records of concerns raised and support given. They make connections between behavioural and safeguarding incidents. Adults who work at the school are subject to the appropriate safeguarding checks before they join.

Pupils receive appropriate information about how to stay safe in different situations.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teaching is too often not as effective as it should be. Some teachers do not check well enough how well pupils have learned. Some do not adapt what they do to meet the needs of different pupils, including those with SEND. When teaching is weaker, some pupils lose concentration and stop trying. Therefore, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that all teachers teach the curriculum as leaders intend.
- Too many pupils do not routinely display positive behaviour in lessons or during social time. The disruption during lessons limits the learning for too many pupils. The use of derogatory language and overly boisterous behaviour are too common. This is tolerated too frequently by pupils and not reported to adults. Leaders need to make sure that their expectations, along with the school's policies and systems, are understood and consistently applied by all staff across the school. They need to ensure that pupils are confident that when they report unacceptable behaviour to adults the necessary actions will be taken, and the situation will improve.

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	137013
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10298923
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,326
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	243
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Keith Mogford
Headteacher	Maggie Ryan
Website	www.notleyhigh.com
Date of previous inspection	25 February 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection in February 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act, the school has received three monitoring visits. These took place in December 2020, February 2021, and July 2021.
- The school joined Bridge Academy Trust in April 2021.
- A new headteacher was appointed in February 2022. One new deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2021 and one new deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2023.
- The school currently uses three 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.

- The school has a specialist resource provision for pupils with speech and language needs.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

- 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 carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, science, history, design technology and modern foreign languages. 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 also visited a range of other lessons in the sixth form.
- An inspector met with staff responsible for the administration of the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. The inspector scrutinised the checks that have been carried out. Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead and deputy safeguarding lead to discuss the arrangements that are in place to safeguard pupils. The lead inspector scrutinised the school's safeguarding records and spoke to governors and trustees regarding safeguarding.
- Inspectors met with pupils to discuss their experience of school, including behaviour and bullying.
- An inspector met with leaders to discuss pupils' personal development and enrichment opportunities, as well as behaviour and attendance.
- An inspector met with the school's special educational needs coordinator and a leader with responsibility for the sixth form.
- An inspector spoke to staff who support pupils at the three alternative providers used by the school.
- Inspectors took account of the 128 responses to Ofsted Parent View, including 97 free-text responses. Inspectors reviewed the 109 pupil responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey. Inspectors considered the 90 staff responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.

Inspection team

Bessie Owen, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Lynne Williams	His Majesty's Inspector
Chris Stainsby	His Majesty's Inspector
Ruth Brock	Ofsted Inspector
Alastair Ogle	Ofsted Inspector

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