

Inspection of The Basildon Upper Academy

Wickford Avenue, Pitsea, Basildon, Essex SS13 3HL

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Rebecca Rees. This school is part of the Basildon Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Gary Smith, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Nick Luckock.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils say that everyone is valued here and treated with respect. Pupils appreciate the guidance and support that the school gives them to be the best they can be. As a result, there are positive relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils also get on well with each other. Pupils are, however, frustrated that others sometimes disturb their learning in lessons.

There are a wide range of clubs and opportunities for pupils to contribute to the school and local community, for instance as charity ambassadors. This develops pupils' self-confidence. Well-chosen visitors help pupils learn how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Pupils in key stage 4 are well prepared for their next steps. They learn about a range of careers and, like students in the sixth form, they can study a range of vocational courses.

Teachers usually adapt work well so that pupils can access the curriculum, especially pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) who attend the school's own provision also receive highly effective support that improves their behaviour and well-being.

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

The curriculum at Basildon Upper Academy is well thought out. It is carefully planned with staff from the Basildon Lower Academy. These plans identify what pupils need to know. It breaks down this knowledge into manageable chunks so that pupils can build on previous knowledge securely. There are frequent checks on what pupils have learned.

Published outcomes for 2023 show that pupils in key stage 4 did not achieve as highly as they should. However, this was principally the result of high levels of persistent absence by some pupils. Teachers are effectively implementing the curriculum to ensure that pupils catch up on learning they have missed. This is increasingly contributing towards improvements in pupils' knowledge.

The school is determined that all pupils can access the curriculum. All pupils in key stage 4 now study French. The school offers pupils a wide range of vocational courses as well as GCSE and A-level qualifications. Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education or employment. Teachers skilfully adapt the curriculum for pupils with SEND so that they become increasingly confident and knowledgeable. While work is closely matched to the needs of pupils, there remain a few teachers who do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve in key stage 4.

The school identifies pupils who need support to improve their reading so they can access the curriculum. It provides them, and pupils who are at the early stage of learning English, with high-quality support. This improves pupils' accuracy and fluency of their reading, so they catch up with their peers.

Behaviour at this school is improving. The school has increased its expectations of pupils as part of a revised behaviour policy, although this is at an early stage. The school provides personalised support for pupils who find it hard to manage their own behaviour. This is improving attitudes to learning. Some pupils do, however, disrupt the learning of others. This is because teachers are not consistent in applying the new policy, and some pupils are confused as to what is acceptable conduct as a result. Pupils do not always attend well. Leaders are using a range of strategies to support pupils to attend school more regularly. These strategies are having a positive impact.

Pupils learn about, and understand, the importance of respecting themselves and others. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum teaches pupils how to look after their physical and mental well-being. Pupils meet a range of employers and representatives from further education colleges. This helps pupils make well-informed choices about their next steps.

Students in the sixth form enjoy studying here. In lessons, teachers use their subject knowledge to provide a curriculum that builds students' knowledge securely. Students are taught to study and use their time effectively. The timetable is condensed into three days. This is to allow time for students to have opportunities for employment to support them remaining in the sixth form. As a result, not enough time is given for students' personal development. There are limited clubs or opportunities to pursue students' interests outside of lessons.

Governors and trustees challenge and support leaders. They are working hard to engage parents in the life and work of the school.

Staff are well supported and are proud to work here.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers are not ambitious enough in their expectations of what pupils in key stage 4 can learn. As a result, pupils do not always build up the depth and breadth of knowledge that they need to achieve as well as they should. The school should ensure that all teachers are ambitious in the work they set pupils, so that pupils build up a wide range of detailed knowledge.
- Although the school has increasingly high expectations of how pupils conduct themselves, pupils' behaviour is not always managed effectively. This is because some pupils and staff do not yet fully understand what these expectations are, and why they are in place. There is some disruption to lessons as a result. The

school should continue to embed expectations consistently so that behaviour continues to improve.

- Students in the sixth form follow a broad curriculum with many vocational options, but they do not have enough opportunities for enrichment activities that would develop a wide range of interests. The school should review the structure of the personal development curriculum in the sixth form to ensure that students are well prepared for their next steps.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	135897
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10288486
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	14 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	917
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	276
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Nick Luckock
Headteacher	Rebecca Rees
Website	www.basildonacademies.org.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	23 and 24 October 2019

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in September 2023.
- The school is part of the Basildon Academies trust with the Basildon Lower Academy that educates pupils in key stage 3.
- The school operates its own provision on site for pupils with SEMH.
- The school currently uses six alternative providers for pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of the trust, the chair of the trust and a trustee, as well as members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, languages, art and design, history and science. 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 discussed the curriculum in some other subjects and visited a range of lessons.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors held meetings with a range of leaders including the careers co-ordinator, and the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator.
- Inspectors met with early career teachers and staff involved in the induction of new teachers.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at other times around school. They met with groups of pupils to discuss behaviour in the school.
- An inspector spoke with representatives from the alternative provisions used by the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of records relating to behaviour and attendance.
- The lead inspector considered the 50 responses and 37 free-text responses received during the inspection to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. He also spoke to a parent on the phone. He considered the 74 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 55 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Steve Woodley, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Steven Hogan	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Lawrence	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Nutman	Ofsted Inspector

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