

Inspection of a good school: The Billericay School

School Road, Billericay, Essex CM12 9LH

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 February 2024

Outcome

The Billericay School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Patrick Berry. This school is part of the Compass Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Ahson Mohammed, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ian Miller.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy learning at The Billericay School. They value the support they receive from staff for their progress and well-being. Pupils treat each other and adults with respect. They are keen to take part in lessons and do well. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. Most pupils meet them; they behave very well. When a few do not, the school provides support and they improve their behaviour.

The school is determined for its pupils to become good citizens. There are many opportunities for them to build their leadership skills as prefects or members of the school council. Sixth-form students work with pupils in the lower school to improve their reading. The school offers a variety of clubs, from chess to a cipher club, and gymnastics. There are many trips and visits, both locally and overseas. Theatre companies and DJs visit the school to lead workshops and perform. These opportunities spark pupils' interest in the curriculum and widen their horizons.

Pupils follow a broad curriculum. This prepares them well for their next steps. Pupils learn about different careers. They meet a range of employers, and further and higher education providers. They are therefore able to make informed choices about their futures.

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

The curriculum is ambitious for all. The school offers many academic and vocational subjects in key stages 4 and 5. Most pupils study a language up to the age of 16 years old, and some study two. The school has thought carefully about the design of its curriculum. Subject leaders' plans build on what pupils have learned in primary school.

They place this knowledge into a logical order so that pupils learn well over time. Teachers regularly review what pupils have been taught. As a result, pupils learn the curriculum well. The school has a consistent focus on building pupils' vocabulary. This strengthens pupils' spoken and written use of language, which they then successfully use across all areas of the curriculum.

In lessons, teachers regularly check pupils' knowledge of what they have learned. Teachers use targeted questions to ensure they adjust the curriculum when gaps in knowledge emerge. Pupils receive clear and useful feedback; they use this to edit and improve their work. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge to model and explain concepts clearly.

The school understands the importance of reading for all pupils. Pupils are expected to read often, at the start of assemblies and in form time. The school regularly checks how well pupils can read. Many books in the library are matched to pupils' reading ages. Pupils who require help with their reading are provided with additional support. Consequently, they become increasingly fluent and accurate readers who can successfully access the curriculum.

Teachers know and identify the needs of pupils accurately. They adapt the curriculum effectively so that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can access the curriculum.

Students in the sixth form build on the knowledge and skills they acquire in key stages 3 and 4. As a result, they achieve very well. Published outcomes for 2023 show that pupils in key stage 4 did not achieve as highly as they should. This was principally the result of high levels of persistent absence by some pupils.

Pupils' behaviour is good. Disruption to pupils' learning is rare. There is little bullying. When it happens, teachers make it stop. Most pupils' attendance has improved considerably. While their attendance is improving, disadvantaged pupils often do not attend as well as their peers. There are some gaps in their learning as a result. The school has begun to review its key stage 4 curriculum to close these gaps. It is working effectively to support all pupils to come to school as much as possible.

The school's 'Shine' culture and character curriculum builds pupils' confidence and equips them to contribute positively to society. Pupils learn about the importance of diversity. They raise money for charity. Older pupils take part in work experience and many gain confidence through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Pupils learn about the features of healthy relationships and how to keep themselves safe.

In September 2023, several school buildings containing reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) were closed in the interests of public safety. Leaders have supported pupils and staff very effectively through this ongoing period of disruption.

Staff, including early career teachers, say that school leaders are highly considerate of their well-being and workload.

Governors and trustees check on the progress of the school and help ensure that pupils are safe.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is lower in comparison with the rest of the pupils. As a result, disadvantaged pupils do not acquire the knowledge that they need to achieve highly. The school should continue and build on its work to improve their attendance.
- There are gaps in some pupils' learning in key stage 4, which means that they do not have the range and breadth of knowledge that they should. The school should review its key stage 4 curriculum to ensure that gaps in learning are identified and swiftly closed.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2018.

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	136861
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10295033
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	1,695
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	325
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ian Miller
Headteacher	Patrick Berry
Website	www.billericayschool.com
Dates of previous inspection	1 and 2 May 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a member of the Compass Education Trust.
- 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.
- The school currently uses two registered and one unregistered alternative providers for pupils.
- Parts of the school site are currently closed as they contain RAAC. Consequently, the school uses several temporary classrooms. In the first half term of this academic year, pupils were provided with a mixture of face-to-face and online learning due to safety concerns on site.

Information about this inspection

- 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 spoke to the chief executive officer of the trust, trustees and members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, design technology, and geography. 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 special educational needs coordinator.
- The lead inspector 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.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of records relating to behaviour and attendance.
- The lead inspector considered the 393 responses and 338 free-text responses received during the inspection to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. He also considered the 149 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 599 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Steve Woodley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Michael Skelly

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