

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: The Burgess Hill Academy

Station Road, Burgess Hill, West Sussex RH15 9EA

Inspection dates:

17 and 18 December 2024

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that aspects of the school's work may not be as strong as at the time of the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The principal of this school is Karen Clinton. This school is part of the University of Brighton 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 (CEO), Dr John Smith, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Siobhan Denning.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and welcoming at this school. Staff are committed to ensuring all pupils develop academically and personally. There is an increasing sense of pride across the school community.

Staff know their pupils well and relationships are strong. Staff are committed to providing an ambitious and inclusive school experience for all. They are determined to improve examination results. Pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum, and expectations of what pupils can achieve are increasing. Most pupils are responding positively to this challenge, including many with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

The school's systems are instilling a positive culture. Pupils, parents and staff recognise that behaviour is improving. Overall, lessons are calm and purposeful. Pupils are respectful and orderly during social times. However, some pupils struggle with the school's high expectations for behaviour and attendance. Too many pupils receive suspensions or do not attend school regularly enough.

The school has been through a period of turmoil but there is now a strong team in place. The school and trust share an ambitious vision for the future. Staff are very positive about the ongoing developments at the school. While this work is starting to have impact, it requires more time to fully embed.

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

The school's actions to raise aspirations are starting to have impact. Pupils can choose from a range of key stage 4 options. More are taking the English baccalaureate suite of subjects. Almost all pupils study alongside their peers. The school supports pupils with SEND effectively overall. It identifies their needs accurately. It provides staff with clear information about how to support these pupils. Most staff use this information effectively in lessons. When pupils with SEND attend regularly, they achieve in line with their peers. The school recognises that a few pupils need an alternative curriculum. Staff take care to ensure these programmes meet the pupils' needs.

The curriculum is organised logically for each subject. Staff are now refining what pupils learn in key stage 3, so they lay the strongest possible foundations for Years 10 and 11. Generally, staff follow the school's clear 'teaching and learning framework'. Many teachers introduce new content effectively and provide pupils with regular opportunities to practise and apply their learning. They check pupils' understanding and provide them with helpful feedback. The quality of written work and verbal responses is strong in these cases, including for pupils with SEND. However, staff do not yet identify and address misconceptions consistently swiftly enough, particularly in more complex tasks. Consequently, while pupils may recall what they have learned recently, many cannot routinely apply their broader knowledge confidently over time.

The school knows which pupils are not yet fluent readers. A small group receives phonics support, and they catch up to where they should be swiftly. Others receive effective help to improve their comprehension. However, the school has not yet started its new programme designed to address pupils' precise reading gaps. As a result, some pupils continue to face challenges with aspects of reading that impacts their overall progress.

The school's new behaviour and attendance systems are applied consistently. Pupils generally respect the new expectations and routines. They enjoy positive relationships with staff and appreciate the rewards. However, there are too many who persistently display unhelpful attitudes to their education, and many are disadvantaged pupils. As a result, rates of suspension and absence are too high. Reducing this is a key priority. The school has strengthened its pastoral and inclusion systems to support these pupils better but needs more time to have a significant impact.

Pupils are well-prepared for the future. Important personal development themes are addressed in age-appropriate ways. For example, pupils learn about healthy relationships, online safety and equality. Careers education is strong. It is well supported by employers and education and training providers. Pupils appreciate the extra-curricular and leadership opportunities at the school. Staff ensure that these activities are accessible to all pupils.

Those responsible for governance provide strong oversight and challenge to the school, including in relation to safeguarding. Staff appreciate the care taken with their well-being and workload during this period of change.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's reading strategy has not yet been fully implemented, particularly the strand designed to support pupils who are not yet fluent readers. As a result, some pupils who need help with reading do not catch up with their peers quickly enough. This can affect their overall progress. The school should continue to prioritise the full implementation of its new programme for the weakest readers to ensure reading gaps are identified and addressed promptly, enabling all pupils to access the curriculum effectively.
- The school's well-thought-through curriculum development strategy is not yet embedded across all areas. Sometimes, expectations of what pupils can achieve could be higher, and there remains variation in how effectively the curriculum is taught. This means that some pupils do not develop the subject fluency and confidence they need to make strong progress over time. The school should continue its efforts to ensure teaching is of a consistently high standard across all subjects and that pupils' outcomes improve.
- The school is grappling with a legacy of very high suspension rates and low attendance among a significant minority of pupils. As a result, these pupils experience a disrupted education and miss out on opportunities for learning and personal development, leading to gaps in their knowledge. The school should continue to refine its pastoral and inclusion approaches, as well as its work supporting staff, to improve pupils' attitudes toward education and reduce suspensions and absences. This will help ensure that all pupils have access to a consistent and supportive educational experience.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness in 1 and 2 May 2019.

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	142089
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10341787
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1081
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Siobhan Denning
CEO of the trust	John Smith
Principal	Karen Clinton
Website	www.theburgesshillacademy.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	1 and 2 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the University of Brighton Academies Trust.
- The school uses four registered and one unregistered alternative provisions.
- 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

- 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.

- Inspectors met with the principal and other senior staff.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from board of trustees, the trust executive team and the local governing body.
- To evaluate the quality of education, inspectors spoke to staff, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke with several groups of pupils and also considered pupils' opinions expressed through the pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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' interest first.
- Inspectors met with groups of staff and also considered the opinions expressed through Ofsted's online staff survey.
- Inspectors took account of the views expressed through Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Mary Davies, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Julia Mortimore

Ofsted Inspector

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