



Brittons School and Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 102339
LEA London Borough of Havering

Inspection number 274835
Inspection dates 3rd – 4th May 2005
Reporting inspector Penny Holden

Inspection deemed to have been carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 according to section 12(3) of the same act.

Type of School	Comprehensive	School address	Ford Lane
School category	Community Technology College		Rainham
Age range of pupils	11 - 16		Essex
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	RM13 7BB
Number on roll	1118	Fax number	01708 630002
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	01708 630325
Date of previous inspection	20/09/1999	Headteacher	Mr C Saunders
			Mr R Sheffield

Age group	Published	Reference no.
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Introduction

The inspection was a pilot of the new arrangements for inspection announced by Ofsted in its consultation paper of February 2004. It was carried out with the support and co-operation of Brittons School and Technology College and the local education authority.

The inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Brittons is bigger than average, and growing. It is close to the border with the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham and about a third of its pupils come from primary schools there. Most pupils are White-British with about one in ten coming from ethnic minority backgrounds. A handful of pupils are learners of English as an additional language and a few are looked after children. The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs is broadly average, as is the proportion entitled to free school meals.

The school is involved in a range of initiatives to support pupils' learning and the life of the school. Having technology college status has given the school access to valuable extra funding and resources. It has had considerable difficulties in recent years in recruiting and retaining staff partly due to the cost of living in the area.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Brittons is a good school which helps pupils reach their potential. The leaders and managers put improving what is on offer for pupils at the heart of their decision making. They have an astute view of the school's strengths and weaknesses through their excellent self evaluation. Inspectors agree with the school's view of its success. There is a clear vision and a hunger for improvement. The governing body is extremely supportive but relies too much on the school's information without asking critical questions.

Teaching is good because teachers make lessons lively to ensure pupils learn. For example, they make very effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) to promote learning and raise standards. Pupils achieve well so that by the time they leave the school their standards are in line with those found nationally. The school's commitment to every pupil is demonstrated by the fact everyone achieved at least one GCSE pass last year. However, not enough pupils get the highest results. The school has rightly identified the need for more work related courses at Key Stage 4 especially those that would appeal to girls. Another reason for pupils' good achievement is that they are cared for well. Their personal development is given high priority. Behaviour around the school is of a very high order. Links with other organisations are used well to support pupils' learning and development. Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel they are able to achieve well. Many take part in the wide range of extra activities. The vast majority of parents and pupils are very happy with the school and all it offers.

The school has demonstrated its very strong capacity to improve by improving personal, social and health education, ICT and religious education (RE) since the last inspection. This was accomplished alongside achieving technology college status which enabled a major improvement in resources. The school uses all resources well and provides good value for money.

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities through work related courses to appeal to both boys and girls.
- Continue to work towards helping more pupils to attain higher levels.
- Work with governors to help them become more critical friends.

Achievement and standards

Pupils achieve average standards overall and meet their targets. They start in Year 7 with below average standards. They make good progress in Key Stage 3, particularly in mathematics and science, but some good progress is also made in English. At the end of Key Stage 4, the percentage of pupils who get five or more higher GCSE grades is broadly in line with the national average; the percentage of pupils gaining five or more graded results is very high. Results vary between subjects, which to some extent reflect pupils' choices. Mathematics results are slightly higher than those in English. Science results are lower. There is a wide variation in results in technology subjects, and in the arts, humanities and modern foreign languages. The school monitors the results carefully and takes effective action to address weaknesses.

Overall progress in Key Stage 4 is good, in spite of variations. Most pupils progress at a steady rate, including those with special educational needs and looked after children. There is some variation in the performance of boys and girls between subjects, which the school has identified and is attending to, but these are not significantly more than those found nationally.

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being

Pupils develop a good sense of social awareness within the school's strong moral framework and because of the many opportunities to take responsibility. They increase their understanding of other cultures through all school activities. RE lessons, for example, include a very interesting focus on Christians in countries other than Britain. Pupils' spiritual development is fostered in registration and in lessons such as art, where Picasso's weeping woman and Giacomitti's statues were linked to images of the Holocaust.

From their attitudes in lessons, it is clear that pupils enjoy coming to school, particularly where teachers make lessons motivating and interesting. Attendance is improving. One pupil said that life in school "has its ups and downs" but they appreciate the efforts adults make to enable them to achieve. The school's high expectations of pupils' behaviour are met.

By tackling bullying very publicly, the school has helped pupils understand the problem better and brought it into the open. Peer mediators, who are specially trained older students, are extremely effective in helping younger pupils deal with bullying. Pupils have identified that they need to take more responsibility for stopping bullying when they see it happening.

By giving pupils a voice through the school council, the school is successful in preparing them to participate in their communities. The school council has been instrumental in making many improvements to the school, including the move to healthy food in the canteen. This has been so successful a queue often forms at the salad bar. This is an important aspect in the pupils' understanding of opting for a healthier lifestyle.

Despite all this, too many pupils have low expectations of what they can achieve in the world of work, with few aspiring to university, but the school is aware of this and has plans to deal with it.

Grade: 2

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

The school has an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of its teachers and has effective ways of helping them to improve. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils learn particularly well when the lesson is a mixture of theory and practical, where pupils can learn something new, try it out and then add new knowledge or refine their practice. This was demonstrated well in a food technology lesson. Pupils are eager and successful learners. They feel that their best teachers help them understand the National Curriculum level they are working at and how they can get to the next. In an excellent music lesson the teacher questioned pupils to elicit from them how their performance could have been improved to reach the next level. Interactive white boards are used enthusiastically by teachers to present work and cited by pupils as something that helps them understand and learn. There are still areas where teaching needs improvement, for example, where teachers do not manage pupils effectively and this gets in the way of the pupils' learning. There are also occasions where teacher shortage means pupils have temporary teachers for a subject.

Many subjects have developed interesting and effective assessment systems that include pupils in marking and assessing their own work before selecting their next assessment targets with their teachers' help. ICT is used well to track learners' progress. It is also effective in giving pupils rich and stimulating learning resources. Pupils with learning difficulties and those who are gifted and talented are identified accurately and provision is good. As a result they make good progress.

Grade: 2

Curriculum and other activities

At Key Stage 3, there is an appropriate education for both boys and girls, including those with special educational needs. A good range of activities outside lessons is available to all pupils and many participate. Many pupils said these extra activities really helped them get the best out of school.

At Key Stage 4, pupils have a satisfactory range of academic opportunities and the school plans to increase the variety of subjects offered. As a result, the curriculum is in a period of transition as the school prepares rightly to provide more work-related opportunities for pupils. This has been guided by the school's status as a technology college and by the need to interest underachieving pupils in more appropriate courses. The school is monitoring the effectiveness and popularity of these to ensure they meet pupils' needs. Work-related learning in technology has, so far, been more attractive to boys with fewer technology courses that might appeal equally to girls.

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support

Pupils are cared for well. A very good pastoral system supports pupils' academic progress and personal development. Pupils agree that they are very well supported by the school. "Our good relationships with the teachers and other adults help us learn. If we are worried about something we know they will listen to us". Effective procedures ensure that pupils know who to approach when they encounter problems or difficulties. Pupils who feel distressed or anxious are supported very successfully by adults and other pupils. Both pupils who have been bullied and their peer-mediators are confident that the system is effective. One peer mediator said "I know we make a difference". Systems for child protection are good and are used well by staff.

Teachers use special software to keep accurate records of pupils' progress and standards of work across all subject areas. They use this information effectively to set challenging targets and to help pupils improve their work. Year 9 pupils have good advice from tutors about their subject choices before entry to Year 10. The school has recognised, correctly, the need to revamp careers guidance, particularly to encourage higher aspirations of some pupils.

Grade: 2

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good. Leaders throughout the school strive successfully to provide a good and interesting education for pupils. They systematically seek information about how well things are going and are willing to change and revise their ideas to find what works most effectively. This self evaluation is a real strength of the school. It takes into account the views of parents and pupils and acts upon them well. Governors meet regularly and are extremely supportive. However, they often rely on the school to raise and answer significant issues rather than asking critical questions themselves.

The leadership team are very good at using available initiatives to improve the education offered to pupils. BIP, the behaviour improvement programme and Excellence Cluster funding has enabled the school to support vulnerable pupils as well as those who are particularly gifted. Positive ways of managing pupils' behaviour are very effective. Home-school support workers are one way of supporting pupils who have difficulties in school. Links with external agencies also enrich and support the work of the school. The local pre-school, for example, offers work placements for pupils. Looked-after children and pupils with special needs are nurtured and supported conscientiously by the school. Resources are used well and effectively managed; the new projectors and interactive white boards are good examples of this. They help teachers improve learning and pupils feel lessons are more stimulating and appealing.

Recruitment and selection of staff has been imaginative and effective over a time when it has been very difficult to attract teachers for certain subjects. For example, the Leadership Improvement Grant has been used to support the training of middle leaders and to run the graduate teacher programme. This has ensured pupils are taught well and protected.

All pupils are encouraged to take full part in the life of the school and to achieve their potential. The fact that every pupil left school last year with at least one GCSE is testimony to this.

The school's capacity to improve is excellent. This is shown by the significant improvements since the last inspection and the achievement of technology college status.

Grade: 2

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INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall	16-19
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OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	N/A	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Y	
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Y	

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

How well do learners achieve?	2	
The <i>standards</i> reached by learners	3	
How well learners' make <i>progress</i> , taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community.	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	
How well does the provision promote the well-being of learners?	2	

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Y	

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	Yes/No/NA
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are taught about sexual health risks	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe.	Yes/No/NA
Procedures for Child Protection meet the requirements of <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i>	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
How well learners enjoy and achieve	Yes/No/NA
Support is given to learners with poor behaviour and attendance	Yes
Learners' personal and academic development are monitored	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	Yes/No/NA
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, are consulted when key decisions affecting them have to be made and their views are listened to	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	Yes/No/NA
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop their enterprise and financial skills, and work in teams	Yes
Education and training for all learners in 14-19 is co-ordinated to give experience of work based learning	Yes

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Brittons School and Technology College
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Rainham
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5 May 2005

Dear Pupils

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school. Thank you for taking part in the inspection by talking to us about your work, your life in school and all you do.

- We believe your school is a good school.
- The headteacher and the people with responsibility make decisions with your best interests in mind. You, through the school council, play an important part in improving the school and your ideas are acted upon.
- You enjoy coming to school and you achieve well particularly where teachers make the lessons lively.
- When teachers use overhead projectors and computers it helps you to learn.
- Another reason for your good achievements is that you are cared for well. The jobs you do, such as peer-mediator, help the school run efficiently and pupils work happily.
- You behave in a very sensible and mature way around the school and in lessons.
- The vast majority of you and your parents are very happy with the school and all it offers. Many of you take part in the wide range of extra activities.
- The school has improved personal, social and health education, ICT and RE since the last inspection.
- Becoming a technology college has improved your resources.

Your school needs to:

- provide more work related courses that interest both boys and girls
- continue to help more of you gain higher levels in your exam results. You can play your part here by aiming just a little higher than you do now and working just a little bit harder
- ensure the governing body asks the staff of the school more demanding questions to check that everything is going as well as it could.

Penny Holden
Lead Inspector