

Brittons School and Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102339
Local Authority	Havering
Inspection number	307975
Inspection dates	10–11 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Asyia Kazmi HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1090
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Christopher Saunders
Principal	Mr Robert Sheffield
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2005
School address	Ford Lane Rainham RM13 7BB
Telephone number	01708 630 002
Fax number	01708 630 325

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Brittons is a larger than average mixed school, with fewer girls than boys. The majority of students are White British, with a small number of students from a wide range of ethnicities making up the rest of the school population. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is below average.

Nearly a fifth of students are eligible for free school meals; this is above average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is above average. These difficulties are predominantly in the areas of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, and in language or communication, including dyslexia.

The school is a Specialist Technology College. It has a Healthy School Award and achieved the Sportsmark in 2008.

Brittons Babes is an on-site childcare provision which is not managed by the governing body. This provision was inspected immediately prior to the inspection of Brittons School and the inspection report is available on the Ofsted website.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Brittons School provides a satisfactory quality of education. Its strength is in the care and support that it provides, particularly for vulnerable students, and the partnerships that it has with a wide range of organisations to deliver extended services to its students and the local community, such as the on-site childcare and adult learning programmes.

By the end of Year 11, the standards students reach are below average. Given students' starting points - which were below average, particularly in English - this represents satisfactory progress overall and good progress in mathematics. Although students' progress in English was satisfactory, the school has rightly focused its attention on accelerating their progress in order to raise standards in this key subject. Senior leaders have recognised that boys' attainment is lower than the girls, although they make similar progress, and the school has taken some key actions to redress this. For example, targeted intervention has been provided for students in Year 11, including focused teaching to address students' weakness in English, mathematics and science. This is helping to raise standards. Support staff are very effective in lessons and provide good support to students with learning difficulties, ensuring that they are able to access the curriculum, and as a result they make good progress. Students' attainment on entry is increasing and they now join the school with average standards in most years. Their current progress is satisfactory.

Inspectors encountered many students who are polite, courteous and well mannered. Relationships between students and teachers are positive overall, and students are very appreciative of the time teachers are willing to give up for them. There is good, and outstanding, teaching in the school but the quality of teaching and learning overall is satisfactory. A number of teachers are skilled in planning well-structured lessons which challenge students. In these lessons, teachers make good use of questioning to elicit understanding and capture students' interest by using well-designed resources. However, in too many lessons teachers' planning does not stretch students, particularly the higher-attaining ones, to reach their full potential. In addition, teachers are not always skilled in checking the understanding of students to inform future teaching. The school has rightly focused on developing literacy across the curriculum, but the impact in lessons has yet to be seen fully and so students are not always challenged to articulate their thinking well enough. In a few lessons the behaviour of a minority of students disrupts the learning of others, and teachers are not always adept at managing this.

Self-evaluation is undertaken by senior leaders as well as subject leaders, which informs departmental and whole-school planning. Senior leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning; however, their assessments are sometimes too generous. The impact of actions to bring about improvement is beginning to be seen in certain areas such as in science, where students' progress has improved rapidly in Key Stage 4. Hence the capacity to improve is satisfactory.

The focus of the school's work to bring about improvement has been at Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 3, standards are also below average, and in some areas too much focus has been placed on developing resources rather than systematic and precise development of teaching in order to improve learning. Successful action taken to raise standards in Year 11, such as the careful checking of students' progress, has not been applied across the school with the same rigour.

The impact of the school's specialism in technology is satisfactory, and is seen in the wide range of courses available to students and in the collaboration with local organisations to develop

further vocational courses. However, although the targets set for the specialist subjects were met, standards in the subjects are variable, ranging from above average in catering and art to below average in child development and product design.

The support and care provided for vulnerable students is excellent. The school has considered carefully the services that its community needs and has been very open to building relationships with other organisations to promote positive outcomes for students. Staff and parents articulate powerfully how the impact of the school's actions has engaged otherwise disaffected students back into education, or supported vulnerable students so that they achieve success, both personally and academically.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement, particularly for boys in English and higher-attaining students.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that teachers' planning challenges all students and accelerates their progress.
- Develop a robust approach to embedding the development of students' literacy skills across the curriculum.
- Ensure that senior leaders are robust and consistent in monitoring and evaluating, and hence improving, the work of the school.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students who took GCSE examinations last year joined the school with standards which were below average. By the end of Year 11 they made satisfactory progress overall, and over half the students achieved five good GCSE passes; although standards were maintained, this is below average. In science, as a result of focused work to improve standards, students' rates of progress accelerated, and their attainment was close to the national average.

Standards in English declined last year and were below average, particularly for boys. One reason for this was the turbulence in staffing experienced in 2008, which has now stabilised. Although action has been taken to raise standards, and some very good teaching in English was observed, not all of this action is sharply focused in all year groups. Current school data and lesson observation evidence suggest that students' attainment is improving because of targeted intervention, including additional after-school and holiday lessons, and close monitoring of progress against targets. Careful analysis of students' weaknesses, followed by teaching to address these, is helping students to make improved progress.

Senior leaders have responded to the increasing attainment on entry now seen in the school, and higher-attaining students have welcomed the opportunity to take GCSE examinations early. The proportion of students getting the highest grades is improving, but senior leaders acknowledge that the improvement is not rapid enough. Overall, students' achievement is satisfactory.

Students with a statement of special educational needs make very good progress because of the well-targeted support that they receive from support staff. Vulnerable students experience an alternative curriculum as well as mentoring. This has had a positive impact on their

engagement, and many are set to embark on further studies at local colleges. Progress overall for students with learning difficulties is good. However, where teachers are not skilled in planning lessons to meet their needs, their progress falters.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Many students collaborate well together in lessons and develop good relationships with each other in school. They enjoy practical subjects and lessons where there are activities which lead them to discuss and learn from each other. For example, in an English lesson, lively and very thoughtful discussion through well-considered analysis of how a person feels when moving from one country to another developed, and enabled students to show their spiritual and cultural awareness, with one student reflecting, 'no matter where you are, you are who you are'. Inspectors were impressed by the courtesy that students demonstrated. However, there are a small but noticeable number of students whose behaviour lets them down. Sometimes this also hinders the learning of others.

Students have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles, and this is seen in the high number of students who participate in after-school activities. Students are proud to represent their school in local and national challenges, and many contribute to their own school community through, for example, acting as mentors to younger students. The majority of students report that they feel safe and know that if they have concerns, staff will address them. Attendance overall is satisfactory, but senior leaders are very aware of, and support, a proportion of students whose attendance is not adequate. Students are well informed about career pathways, and a higher proportion are continuing in education and training, including those who were at risk of leaving education or training. Students' current achievement in key skills means that their preparation for their future well-being is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Many teachers have high expectations of students, and positive relationships between students and teachers are apparent. Some teachers are very skilled in questioning students. This elicits astute and mature reasoning from students and shows the high standards of which they are capable. In some lessons, students are motivated by teachers' use of interesting resources, including the interactive whiteboard. However, in others, teachers demonstrate an over-reliance on the use of text books. Additionally, some teachers accept, and sometimes praise, low-level answers which do not exemplify students' potential. Teachers do not always plan carefully to cater for the differing abilities of students in their lessons, or structure learning in a way which ensures that all are challenged. This means that sometimes students are doing work which is either too hard or too easy for them.

The pace of lessons varies; some teachers keep students active and engaged through well-timed, interesting activities. However, in other lessons, the pace of learning falters and students become passive learners. The use and quality of marking to improve students' learning is inconsistent across and within subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum which serves the needs of many of its students. The curriculum, sometimes involving partnerships with local businesses, has been enhanced since the previous inspection, particularly in the provision of a range of work-related courses. Training has been given to teachers in developing students' literacy skills; however, the impact of this training in lessons is yet to be consistently seen. Although the curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of students, it is not always fully evaluated. For example, the condensed curriculum in some subjects in Key Stage 3 means that students do not have sufficient time to develop key skills before embarking on the Key Stage 4 curriculum.

The 'Different Steps' curriculum in Key Stage 4 is particularly valuable in engaging students who have been at risk of leaving education. Students are very appreciative of the extra lessons they receive in preparation for their GCSE exams. They are also very positive about the intervention in Year 11, such as the 'team challenges' which have included specific teaching in their areas of weaknesses. Students with difficulties in literacy have individual learning programmes, and their progress is tracked by the support team following the completion of these programmes to ensure that they continue to make good progress.

There is a wide range of extra-curricular provision which students take an active part in. Parents also have the opportunity to take part in taster lessons before students make their curriculum choices, and some, with their children, have attended university taster sessions.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Within this provision, a notable strength of the school's work is the outstanding care and support provided for vulnerable students. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early through liaison with local primary schools by the well-organised support team. As a result, a range of additional provision is in place from when students start, ensuring that there is continuity of support. The home/school support workers, deployed across year groups, establish close links with parents and families and provide vital support to parents, particularly when their children are experiencing difficulties. Parents speak very positively about the continuation of this support even when difficulties are overcome.

Academic guidance is strong in Year 11, but less consistent across other year groups, and is not yet used effectively throughout the school in order to guide students' progress and improve their academic achievement.

Although the attendance of a small number of students is inadequate, the school has taken appropriate action and there is some improvement. However, the systems to improve attendance and punctuality are not followed robustly by all; this includes variability in the practice of form tutors. The majority of students are very positive about the approachability of staff and are confident that if they raise issues or need support, these will be addressed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher's vision for the school is seen in the strong care and support, particularly for vulnerable students. With the support of senior leaders, work to raise standards is now becoming more focused, and the impact of their actions is seen in some key areas, such as the improved standards in Year 11 and in science.

School improvement planning is informed by evaluation undertaken by middle and senior leaders who know the strengths and weaknesses in the work of the school. However, senior leaders recognise that planning is not always sharply focused in identifying key actions which will bring about sustained improvements. Middle leaders, including in English, mathematics and science, are well informed about developments in their subjects. However, there are inconsistencies in other subjects, particularly in ensuring that actions promote improved outcomes for all students. Notably, this is seen in the variability in standards across the different technology subjects. Governors are committed to the school, and through training are better informed and better placed to drive developments. They are beginning to participate more in the monitoring of performance.

The school works effectively with the local community and makes good links with it, and has also developed international links; but senior leaders accept that links nationally are less well developed.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
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?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

24 June 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Brittons School and Technology College, Rainham, RM13 7BB

On behalf of the inspectors who visited your school recently, I would like to thank you very much for the welcome you gave us. We valued the discussions we had with you, and I would like to take this opportunity to share our findings. Your school provides you with a satisfactory standard of education. Its strengths are in the care and support it provides for you, particularly those of you who are experiencing difficulties. The progress you make and the quality of teaching you receive is satisfactory overall. Some of the teaching you receive is good; however, we agree with your senior leaders that sometimes teachers do not challenge you enough to ensure that you make the best progress you can. Many of you told us how much you valued the extra time teachers were willing to give you to help you improve, or to enable you to take part in the many clubs that you participate in.

We were impressed with how courteous and well mannered many of you are, but we also found that this is not always the case, and sometimes the behaviour of a few hinders the learning of others. It is important that the good standard of behaviour that we observed in many lessons is maintained. We also found that attendance is improving, but there are some of you who are absent too often, which hinders your progress.

Your senior leaders want the best for you, and some of the actions they are taking are enabling you to reach higher standards. Last year, the standards students reached were below average. We found that in order to continue to improve your school needs to:

- raise standards and achievement in Key Stages 3 and 4, particularly for boys and higher-attaining students
- improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that teachers' planning meets the needs of all students
- develop a robust approach to improving your literacy in all subjects
- ensure that senior leaders are robust and consistent in checking the work of the school.

You can also help by ensuring that your attendance and behaviour means you are ready to learn, and by using avenues such as the school council to give feedback to the school as to how it can improve further.

Yours faithfully

Asyia Kazmi

Her Majesty's Inspector