

# Inspection of The Bromfords School

Grange Avenue, Wickford, Essex SS12 0LZ

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Inspection dates: 29 and 30 November 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Sixth-form provision

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Most pupils are happy at school. They enjoy engaging in wider enrichment opportunities that link to school values of 'achieve, enrich, prepare', for example the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Pupils are proud to undertake leadership opportunities, such as being 'anti-bullying ambassadors'. Sixth-form students feel they are a cohesive community and get the support and guidance they need, but feel that their opportunities to engage beyond the academic curriculum are more limited than in younger year groups.

Pupils enjoy lessons where teachers have high expectations. In these lessons, pupils are clear about what they are learning and how it builds on what they have learned before. However, their experiences are inconsistent. Pupils do not always learn well or make the progress they should. This is because some teachers do not adapt their teaching effectively to meet pupils' needs.

Pupils feel that staff try to address behaviour issues but are not consistent enough in their application of the behaviour policy. This leads to some low-level disruption of learning.

Some pupils worry about bullying, but feel that staff will support them to successfully resolve issues when they report them. However, some pupils are concerned about small pockets of pupils who have intolerant attitudes and can cause difficulties for others. Although pupils still feel safe, they want leaders to take stronger action to tackle these problems.

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

Since the last inspection, there has been instability and issues of capacity within the senior leadership team that have caused a drop in standards. Trust leaders have taken effective action to stabilise this. This includes trust leaders providing direct additional leadership capacity within the school, and the appointment of the current headteacher and a new deputy headteacher. Leaders have set a new vision for high-quality education based on raising academic aspirations for pupils. This vision is in the early stages of being realised. For example, pupils currently drop a subject at the end of Year 8 to allow them to personalise their curriculum elsewhere. Although pupils still cover the breadth of the national curriculum, this limits the depth in which they explore that subject. The number of pupils entering the academic English Baccalaureate (EBacc) pathway at key stage 4 is also currently low, but is improving following recent changes to the curriculum.

Leaders have outlined the key information that pupils should learn over time. At the start of each lesson, most teachers clearly explain what important concepts pupils need to learn. They check what pupils have remembered from what they have been taught in the past through low-stakes assessment and effective questioning.

Some teachers do not have the subject knowledge and expertise they need to teach the curriculum effectively. Leaders' monitoring of this has not been precise enough. Therefore, where teachers have gaps in their subject expertise, these have not been filled effectively through training. This is particularly the case for non-specialist teachers. This means that pupils receive a variable quality of teaching. This impacts on how well they learn and achieve.

In the sixth form, students benefit from generally more experienced teachers and smaller class sizes. The curriculum is a well-planned and sequenced blend of vocational and academic courses. Teachers' expectations, however, are still inconsistent. While this is less pronounced in the sixth form, the inconsistency still exists, for example in the variable quality of work some students produce.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs identified effectively. Teachers are aware of these needs. However, they do not consistently adapt their teaching to meet these pupils' needs. Leaders have put in place a new approach to provision for SEND to address this. This is centred around supporting staff to adapt teaching to meet this identified need. This new approach is not currently communicated well enough with parents and has not had the time needed to have sufficient impact in changing teachers' practice. Consequently, some parents have concerns about how well their child's need is met.

Leaders have worked to identify those pupils who are at the earlier stages of reading. An appropriate phonics-based programme is in place to support these pupils. Leaders monitoring of the impact of this programme on improving pupils' reading is at an early stage. Consequently, support is not adapted precisely enough based on what pupils have been able to achieve.

Pupils generally want to learn in lessons. Where teachers apply the behaviour policy consistently, pupils' behaviour does not disrupt learning. Where this is not the case, pupils do not have clear enough boundaries. This results in low-level disruption in lessons. Small pockets of pupils do not behave well enough in unstructured times and sometimes display intolerant attitudes. This is because the work leaders have done to embed the school's 'enrich' value, which focuses on positive pupil relationships, has not had enough impact.

Leaders have developed a suitable programme of personal, social and health education. This includes appropriate relationships and sex education. The programme provides opportunities for pupils to learn about fundamental British values and protected characteristics. As the programme is relatively recent, its impact on pupils is not fully realised.

Pupils receive appropriate careers support. Leaders use the Gatsby benchmarks to ensure this. This enables pupils to make well-informed choices about their next steps. Leaders provide a range of opportunities beyond the academic curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 11, but these are more limited in the sixth form.

The trust has worked to add leadership and support capacity to ensure the school is now on the right path of improvement. Staff feel that their workload and well-being are considered and understand the need for change. Leaders have further work to do to ensure their plans improve the quality of provision. This is particularly the case for pupils with SEND.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured staff have been appropriately trained to identify and report concerns. They have ensured that suitable processes are in place to track and follow up concerns effectively. Leaders have established positive relationships with external agencies, such as social workers, to ensure families get the support they need.

Appropriate safer recruitment checks are in place. Where needed, leaders refer to the local authority safeguarding team.

The school has acted to raise awareness of sexual harassment. Leaders follow up when pupils raise any concerns about their peers. Nevertheless, continued work is required to change the embedded intolerant attitudes of a small minority of boys.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Leaders have not ensured that all staff consistently follow the behaviour policy or that the school values around positive relationships are well enough embedded. As a result, there is low-level disruption to learning in some lessons and a small minority of pupils have intolerant attitudes. Some pupils worry and feel upset about the actions and comments others make towards them. Although they still feel safe, this leads them to feel less confident in some areas of the school. Leaders need to ensure that all staff consistently apply the behaviour policy and all pupils treat each other with tolerance and respect.
- Staff do not always have a secure enough understanding of the subjects they teach. This means that pupils do not always benefit from high-quality teaching. This impacts on pupils' progress. Leaders need to ensure that staff receive appropriate training and support to develop the necessary knowledge and skills to teach the curriculum effectively.

## 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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

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|---|--|
| <b>Unique reference number</b>                    | 139181   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                            | Essex  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                          | 10226852   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                             | Secondary Comprehensive  |
| <b>School category</b>                            | Academy converter  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                        | 11 to 18   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                           | Mixed  |
| <b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>        | 1171   |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b> | 92   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>                      | Board of trustees  |
| <b>Chair of trust</b>                             | Ian Miller   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                                | Jochen Tree  |
| <b>Website</b>                                    | <a href="http://www.bromfords.essex.sch.uk/">www.bromfords.essex.sch.uk/</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>                | 24 and 25 May 2016   |

## Information about this school

- The new headteacher took up his post in March 2022.
- The school has an on-site specialist support unit for pupils with autism.
- The school uses two registered and two unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which stipulates that schools must allow colleges and training providers access to every pupil in years 8 to 13 to discuss non-academic routes that are available to them.

## Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, science, physical education, design and technology, and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors met with curriculum leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors conducted meetings with the trust chief executive officer, the chair of trustees, the chair of local governing body, a representative of the local authority, and leaders of provision for SEND, behaviour and attendance, personal development and safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed breaktimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors also had an opportunity to speak with parents by telephone.
- Inspectors visited the school's on-site specialist support unit for pupils with autism. Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator regarding the use of alternative provision and conducted an on-site visit to an unregistered provider.
- Inspectors explored the school's safeguarding culture through viewing safeguarding records and procedures, meeting with a range of pupils and staff, and talking to safeguarding leaders.
- Inspectors considered the 133 responses and 107 free-text responses made by parents to the survey, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered 72 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and the 404 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

## Inspection team

|                               |                         |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| James Chester, lead inspector | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Paul Lawrence                 | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Brenda Watson                 | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Elizabeth Shapland            | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Cindy Impey                   | His Majesty's Inspector |

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