

The Brittons Academy

Ford Lane, Rainham, Essex RM13 7BB

Inspection dates

23–24 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- This is an improving school but leaders have yet to secure consistently good teaching.
- Teachers do not routinely ensure that pupils are given work that challenges them.
- Teaching in science and mathematics is improving but is not yet of consistently good quality.
- Pupils make inconsistent progress. GCSE results are improving but are not yet good enough.
- Pupils with middle and high prior attainment make less progress than those with low prior attainment.
- Pupils lose interest in lessons which lack challenge or are not engaging.
- Subject leadership is of mixed quality.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as other pupils. Pupil premium funding is not spent effectively to support them.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.
- The curriculum has recently improved but does not provide courses that meet all the aspirations of pupils at GCSE, notably in science, physical education and the arts.
- Pupils have varying experiences of provision in performing arts subjects at key stage 3, particularly music.

The school has the following strengths

- The principal leads purposefully and she is building a committed staff team.
- The school knows its main strengths and weaknesses.
- Teaching and outcomes in some subjects, including English, are strong.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and are confident to have a go at the tasks teachers set them.
- The new house system and 'family learning' work well to help pupils feel valued, suitably guided and looked after.
- The school looks after and safeguards the pupils well.
- Pupils are polite, positive and friendly.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching further so that:
 - staff expect more of pupils, especially those of middle and high prior attainment, by setting work which challenges pupils' thinking and learning
 - teachers routinely check how well pupils are learning and adjust their teaching accordingly to speed up progress
 - inconsistencies in quality of teaching between lessons and subjects are eradicated
 - improvements which are under way in science and mathematics accelerate.
- Improve pupils' attendance, particularly among disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that all subject leaders effectively promote improvement in the quality of teaching
 - raising the level of challenge provided to the school by governors.
- Adjust the curriculum so that it meets the aspirations of all pupils by:
 - providing a wider range of GCSE options to higher-attaining pupils, by reviewing the routes and choices available to them in science, physical education and arts subjects
 - ensuring that there is equitable and effective provision for all pupils in drama and music at key stage 3, so that pupils are confident in taking GCSE music if this meets their ambitions and interests.
- Refine and hasten the work which has begun to improve the impact of pupil premium expenditure so that outcomes for, and the aspirations of, disadvantaged pupils improve.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The improvements made under the acting principal's purposeful and resilient leadership are not yet sufficiently rapid or secure enough for the school to be good.
- Senior leaders identify the school's main strengths and weaknesses correctly. However, they tend to overestimate the importance of the school's strengths while underestimating the extent of improvement needed. This reduces the intensity of some improvement work, as the upturns needed in some key subjects or areas are not identified sharply enough.
- Leaders' work to improve teaching has yet to secure consistently good teaching. Parents and pupils rightly note continuing variations in the quality of teaching. Leaders' evaluations of teaching do not always focus on how well teaching enables pupils to learn.
- Some middle leaders, including subject heads, are not yet making the contribution that they should to school improvement. Increasingly, they work effectively together, but less experienced subject leaders focus more on checking lessons in their departments rather than working with staff to improve teaching. There is some good practice in middle leadership. The subject of English is well led, for example. The subject leader works with and develops her team effectively. Leadership in science and mathematics shows recent improvement.
- The acting principal is successful in recruiting and retaining a highly motivated staff. The school manages staff performance in a correct and timely way. Staff perceive this process as fair and constructive, and it is securing improvement.
- The school does not spend its pupil premium funding effectively enough. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are too low over time. However, leaders have recently improved the way they evaluate the impact of the expenditure. They can now identify more sharply areas where the expenditure has brought improvement for certain disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupil premium expenditure also does not yet do enough to help the school in its rightful aim of raising aspirations for disadvantaged pupils. The school is aware of this and work has begun to address it.
- The school spends Year 7 catch-up funding effectively. This ensures that pupils reduce any significant gaps in basic literacy and numeracy.
- The school has recently revised the curriculum. For the most part, these changes meet the needs of pupils. The school encourages pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development suitably. They are prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils feel well informed when choosing their GCSE subjects.
- However, these revisions to the curriculum have created some anomalies. The option to take three science GCSEs which was offered to Year 9 pupils has now been removed. Some subjects are chosen mainly by boys or girls, which can put off members of the opposite gender from taking them. Pupils with high prior achievement have a more limited range of GCSE options than do other pupils. This precludes some of them from readily pursuing their subject strengths, most particularly in arts subjects and physical education.

- From Years 7 to 9, many pupils have only one or two years of music lessons and for a few there is no music provision at all. As a consequence, music is not offered as a GCSE in key stage 4. Pupils are not always confident enough to take it. The provision of drama is also uncertain, so that, like in music, there is a lack of clear progression from one year to the next. This depends simply and unacceptably for each pupil on which class they happen to be in.
- The school provides a range of activities out of school hours, particularly in sport. Some parents and pupils would like to see a wider range of activities. Very few pupils learn musical instruments, many fewer than in the past.
- Leaders ensure that there is well-focused and effective specific provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They spend the funding for these pupils wisely. The pupils generally make more rapid progress from their starting points than many of their peers.
- The local authority provides the school with realistic, constructive advice. The new academy trust guides and supports the school in many ways. However, the support provided has yet to lead to more-rapid improvement where it is most needed.

Governance of the school

- The improvements in governance identified at the previous inspection have yet to be fully sustained. Members of the school's local governing body depend on the acting principal and other leaders for information. They receive and discuss helpful reports, but without challenging leaders sufficiently to improve the school more quickly, or checking rigorously whether pupils' achievements are good enough.
- The academy trust board, with which the formal powers of governance rest, recognises that it needs to quality-assure the work of the local governing body more robustly.
- Governors and trustees competently ensure that they cover all that is required of them, including for safeguarding pupils. Recently, they worked effectively with senior leaders to manage a restructuring of and reduction in staffing.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils are kept safe in school. They feel safe and are well looked after. Staff give pupils clear messages about how to keep safe, including when online.
- Staff are regularly and thoroughly trained in safeguarding. They know exactly what to do if dealing with any child protection concerns. Where there are any such concerns, the school addresses them well. The school has thorough, effective systems and policies, including for reducing the risk of radicalisation. The school maintains appropriate and accurate safeguarding records, including the registers of adults working in the school and of pupil admissions.
- There are systematic procedures for checking the backgrounds of staff when they are appointed.
- The school works well as needed with pupils' families and with other agencies.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Despite there being some strong teaching, in English for example, teaching is inconsistent across the school, both within and between subjects.
- Teachers do not consistently use assessment information to set work at the right level of challenge for all abilities. Too often, tasks that pupils are given are not hard enough for them, especially for middle- and high-attainers. This means that their rates of progress slow down. Very occasionally, the opposite happens and work set is too demanding. This was observed in a mathematics lesson, for example where pupils were set a very complex problem to solve, which many could not attempt.
- The needs of the most able pupils are not consistently well met. Tasks set for them do not always promote deep thinking or sophisticated development of skills.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not consistently receive the support they need. In a Year 9 science lesson, some pupils were falling behind other pupils, and because this was not addressed, their learning slowed down.
- There is some good practice, where teachers are effective in checking how well pupils are learning. However, too often teachers do not always sort out pupils' errors or misconceptions.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They choose teaching resources carefully, including visual resources such as photographs. This means that teachers often plan purposeful lessons in which pupils can readily participate.
- Teachers are skilled in explaining learning and they use technical and complex language effectively. This particularly benefits pupils who speak English as an additional language. These pupils generally achieve well.
- The teaching of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective. These pupils also make good progress.
- In some subjects, well-organised teaching and learning outside the classroom deepens pupils' understanding. Fieldwork is well used well to support the learning of pupils taking geography GCSE.
- The relationships between adults and pupils are good. Consequently, pupils enjoy many of their lessons and join in with confidence. In an English lesson, where pupils used their descriptive writing skills, the teacher imaginatively showed pupils how to use techniques, such as metaphor, in more advanced ways than they had done before. Attractive visual displays brought this to life. Pupils worked hard to follow the teacher's suggestion to refer to all five senses in their own writing. They made considerable progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The new house family system is developing well. Pupils like the opportunities in family learning periods to share their thoughts with those from other year groups. Support

and guidance managers do valuable work, anticipating problems and misbehaviour. Pupils receive useful teaching in assemblies about safety and applying British values, such as mutual respect. The supportive work of house staff and leaders helps pupils to overcome any personal problems and barriers to learning.

- The school takes good care of pupils who attend off-site provision. Pupils are kept safe and achieve some success in the courses and provision offered.
- Bullying is not common. Pupils and staff know how to deal with it.
- Pupils reliably show that they have the self-confidence in lessons to 'have a go', answer questions, and show and explain their work. They willingly take on responsibilities, such as being prefects.
- Valuable joint-working with local schools helps to prevent and resolve some misbehaviour. The rate of fixed-term exclusion is low.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Absence rates are too high, especially for disadvantaged pupils and for some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Persistent absence, however, is not common. The school deals with individual cases well. The school has now improved its system for managing absence, but this has yet to show sustained improvement.
- Some pupils are not consistently punctual to lessons, which can delay the start or prevent a sharp start to some lessons. There is some minor boisterousness when pupils move around the site.
- In lessons, a few pupils lose interest and become distracted when the teaching is insufficiently engaging or challenging. This wastes valuable time.
- Pupils feel that behaviour has improved since the previous inspection. They say that the use of homophobic language, for instance, is much less common than in the past, and this is supported by school records.
- Pupils say that the rewards and sanctions recently introduced in school are fair. As a result, they know where they stand with staff. They say that unfair or 'rogue' punishments are less common.
- Pupils are friendly, helpful and present themselves smartly. They behave safely, politely and thoughtfully.
- In lessons which are more engaging, pupils work very hard, with pride and great commitment. In a GCSE drama lesson, for example, pupils performed with real feeling a scenario they had prepared about mental health. Others in the class commented on this aptly and sensitively.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- At GCSE in 2016, results were mixed. Pupils underperformed in some subjects, including mathematics, science and religious studies. They did notably better in some others, including English, resistant materials, drama and music BTEC, although few pupils reached the top grades.

- Disadvantaged pupils entitled to the support of pupil premium funding, White British pupils and boys do not achieve as well as their classmates, particularly in English and mathematics. They also do less well than pupils nationally. This applies to pupils currently in the school and to last year's GCSE examinations.
- Pupils who have average and high prior attainment do not make as much progress as those pupils with low prior attainment.
- Pupils who read to inspectors did so with confidence and accuracy, showing suitable comprehension of the texts.
- Outcomes in mathematics and science have begun to rise in all year groups. However, across all subjects, inspection evidence confirms that current progress is variable for groups of pupils, within year groups and across subjects.
- Almost all pupils move to suitable placements for their future education, generally in local colleges. Most have effective literacy skills. With better results and grades, however, they would clearly be better prepared for the next stages of education and have wider options.

School details

Unique reference number	136576
Local authority	Havering
Inspection number	10031723

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	854
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Sharon Roots
Acting Principal	Suzanne Scott
Telephone number	01708 630002
Website	www.brittons.havering.sch.uk
Email address	school@brittons.havering.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 June 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- This is a smaller than average-sized secondary school. It is in an academy within the Empower Learning Academy Trust. Since the previous inspection, the principal has become executive principal within the trust. Brittons has a new acting principal.
- Most pupils are White British. Many other ethnicities and backgrounds are represented in smaller numbers.
- A small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- More than twice the national average proportion of pupils is considered to be disadvantaged and entitled to the support of pupil premium funding.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is

slightly above average.

- A small number of pupils attend registered local provision off-site. The providers used are Future Gateways, Olive Academy, Motivations and Barking and Dagenham College.
- In 2016, the school met the floor standards, which are the government's minimum expectation for pupils' progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in all year groups across the school, some jointly with senior leaders. They observed around the school at breaks, playtimes and lunchtimes and during assemblies.
- They scrutinised samples of pupils' work in several subjects, including science and mathematics, and heard Year 7 pupils read.
- They talked with the acting principal, senior and middle leaders, members of staff, pupils, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors evaluated documents, including the school's assessments of pupils, its improvement plan and evaluations, records of attendance and behaviour and minutes of meetings, including those of meetings of the local governing body.
- They took close account of the views of parents from the 16 responses on Parent View, which is on Ofsted's website. They also met with parents. They considered carefully the views of staff and pupils from confidential questionnaires.

Inspection team

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Colin Mackinlay	Ofsted Inspector

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