

Brentwood County High School

Shenfield Common, Brentwood, Essex CM14 4JF

Inspection dates

3–4 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
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently strong within subject areas, across key stages and year groups. As a result, pupils do not make enough progress, from their individual starting points, in many subject areas.
- Teachers do not draw sufficiently on what pupils already know and understand when planning new learning. As a consequence, pupils are not stretched to make good progress in many subject areas including mathematics and science.
- Funding to improve the progress that disadvantaged pupils make has not had sufficient impact on pupils' outcomes. Leaders have not ensured that the progress of disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, is a high priority.
- Leaders have not ensured that all staff implement school policies on behaviour management.
- Some pupils do not have positive attitudes towards learning resulting in the disruption of learning for other pupils.
- Leaders have not effectively ensured that the tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress is shared with middle leaders, staff and pupils. Consequently, the current assessment and tracking system does not have a positive impact on pupils' progress in many areas of the curriculum.
- Governors have not offered sufficient challenge to leaders regarding the progress pupils make at each key stage. Additionally, they have not held leaders to account sufficiently for the progress that disadvantaged pupils make.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders monitor pupils' attendance and punctuality closely. The attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and punctuality across the key stages have improved as a result.
- The curriculum offers opportunities to develop pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding. In addition, pupils develop clear awareness of British values and their importance in twenty-first century Britain.
- Leaders are tenacious in ensuring the physical and emotional safety of all pupils. They know the pupils well and are alert to potential dangers, both online and in the physical world.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Teaching assistants provide effective additional support, ensuring that pupils are able to access the curriculum successfully.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the quality of leadership ensuring that it has a sustained impact on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and pupil outcomes. In particular, ensure that:
 - the school's policies on behaviour management, marking and feedback are consistently adhered to by all members of staff
 - middle leaders, particularly of mathematics and science, are explicitly involved in improving standards for all pupils.
- Improve the impact that leaders have, so that the overall effectiveness of the school becomes good, by ensuring that:
 - the school's behaviour management policy is implemented consistently by all staff in order to improve pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning
 - the school's marking and feedback policy is followed consistently by all teachers so that all pupils know what to do to improve their work
 - the effectiveness of subject leaders is improved so that they have a greater impact on improving outcomes throughout the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment within subjects and across key stages, particularly in mathematics and science, to ensure that pupils make the progress that they are capable of, by:
 - teachers embedding more robust challenge in activities ensuring that they consider pupils' various starting points
 - ensuring that teachers create well-structured activities to motivate and inspire pupils to want to learn.
- Ensure that the difference between the progress that disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, make and the progress of their non-disadvantaged peers nationally is diminished.
- Improve pupils' behaviour for learning in the classroom so that pupils are able to focus on academic study and make more rapid progress across the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders' actions to improve the progress of pupils, including the progress of disadvantaged pupils, have had insufficient impact. This is because the agreed strategies have not been applied by all staff to ensure consistently high-quality teaching and learning for all pupils. This has slowed the rate of improvement.
- The school's self-evaluation is too generous. Leaders have not been sufficiently self-critical in their analysis of the school's performance and this has limited the capacity to improve pupils' outcomes across the curriculum.
- Leaders have not addressed fully the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning, both within subject areas, and across key stages and year groups. Senior leaders have not provided enough support to ensure that middle leaders are able to secure improvements in the subjects they lead.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced, encompassing subjects such as psychology, economics and sociology. However, there is too much inconsistency between classes and across the curriculum resulting in inconsistent outcomes.
- Pupil premium funding is not spent effectively. In recent years, disadvantaged pupils have made less progress than other pupils nationally. Leaders do not check that the way the funding is spent is having a positive impact on pupils. In particular, the impact of the additional funding on the most able disadvantaged pupils has not been rigorously evaluated.
- Leaders set ambitious targets for pupils. However, behaviour management systems, intended to improve pupils' attitudes towards learning, have not been implemented consistently well. This results in some pupils not making the progress they are capable of.
- Subject leaders, some of whom are new to their roles, are using the tracking and monitoring systems to identify how well pupils are performing. However, the information some subject leaders find out is not being used effectively to inform and, subsequently, improve the quality of teaching and learning. Additionally, some subject leaders' focus lies predominantly with attainment and does not fully take account of pupils' different starting points and the progress they should make.
- Year 7 catch-up funds are used effectively to ensure that pupils' literacy and mathematical skills develop well. The school has developed these systems well ensuring that an increasing number of pupils benefit from additional support to improve their ability to access the secondary curriculum.
- Leaders have identified the importance of the library in supporting pupils' enjoyment of reading. The librarian has ensured that the library is well stocked with a range of texts that appeal to pupils.
- Although some parents felt that the stability and consistency of teaching and learning was a concern, there are many parents who responded to Parent View very positively about the successes of the school, particularly with regard to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

- Leaders accurately identify strengths and areas for development and ensure that appropriate professional development opportunities are provided. As a result, some poor performance has been tackled effectively.
- Leaders of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have embedded suitable strategies, such as one-to-one support, and deployed teaching assistants well. As a consequence, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress in line with other pupils nationally. Funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used diligently to ensure that pupils make progress.

Governance of the school

- The information that governors use to evaluate the success of the school does not always provide an accurate picture. For example, governors do not have an accurate understanding of the impact of pupil premium funding on the achievements of disadvantaged pupils. This is particularly the case for the most able disadvantaged pupils. As a consequence, the ability of governors to hold school leaders accountable for the progress of disadvantaged pupils is weakened.
- Many members of the governing board, including the chair of governors, have the necessary breadth of understanding, skills and knowledge to ensure that school leaders are held accountable for pupils' achievements.
- Governors have challenged school leaders effectively regarding the importance of improving attendance, particularly for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's designated safeguarding leads have a strong understanding of the wide range of risks that pupils could face, such as neglect and sexual exploitation. They ensure that all staff receive regular and timely training in safeguarding. Consequently, staff are knowledgeable about how to ensure pupils' welfare and safety.
- Safeguarding leads are tenacious in ensuring that all pupils are safe, through timely and pertinent referrals. The record-keeping system is highly effective, and is updated and reviewed regularly. The designated safeguarding leads have strong links with other agencies, such as children's social care, and this strengthens the school's ability to keep pupils safe.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe when online and the procedure for referring any suspicious behaviour. Leaders have embedded a strong culture of safeguarding equipping pupils with the skills, knowledge and understanding of how to ensure their emotional and physical well-being.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good across the school. Teachers do not have equally high expectations and aspirations of what pupils can achieve from their respective starting points. Some tasks do not support the rapid development of key skills such as reading, writing and mathematics. The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, do not routinely make the progress that they are capable of.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics and science is inconsistent. Staff do not always tackle pupils' misunderstandings consistently resulting in limited progress for some pupils, including disadvantaged pupils.
- Teachers' expectations of the conduct of pupils are not sufficiently high. As a result, some pupils display challenging behaviour that impedes the academic progress of others. Inspectors spoke to some pupils who stated that behaviour for learning improved where teachers planned well-structured, challenging lessons, but worsened when pupils could see no relevance to the work set.
- The use of self-assessment in lessons is not effective. Pupils have not been sufficiently prepared to assess their work with a high degree of accuracy. Consequently, some misconceptions are not addressed thereby stalling the progress that pupils are capable of making.
- Teachers do not consistently provide effective feedback to help accelerate pupil progress in a range of subjects. However, in contrast some subjects provide exemplary feedback with evidence of pupils making rapid progression in English, sociology, media and history.
- Teaching is not consistently effective in some subjects at both key stage 3 and 4. Consequently, some pupils make good progress and other pupils make slower progress, when they are studying the same subject.
- Reading skills are developed effectively in some subject areas such as sociology. Pupils extend their understanding of language which accelerates their ability to talk and write about complex ideas and themes. Inspectors observed pupils in an English lesson discussing, with sophistication, the impact of language choices on the ideas expressed in poetry. All key stage 3 pupils follow a commercial reading scheme which they engage well with. The librarian has constructed effective systems alongside an exciting range of texts to promote pupils' enjoyment of reading. However, this is not fully developed at key stage 4 where use of the library declines markedly.
- Pupils develop and extend their writing skills in some subject areas, such as history, media and English. However, in other areas pupils do not write extensively and do not make good progress in articulating their understanding of specific ideas and concepts.
- The daily tutor period is not used constructively. Pupils expressed frustration to inspectors about the lack of focus regarding personal development and the limited learning that takes place.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive good-quality, targeted support. Staff ensure that pupils' successes and challenges are communicated to other staff regularly to ensure that they make good progress across the curriculum.

- Pupils gain valuable skills, knowledge and understanding through the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities that are offered, such as trips to Barcelona. Pupils' understanding of other cultures and ways of life is broadened. There are many after-school sports clubs which promote pupils' health and social interaction with others.
- Where teaching is effective in promoting pupils' progress, teaching assistants are effective in supporting pupils to develop their understanding. However, where teaching is weaker, teaching assistants are not deployed effectively.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils are not consistently respectful towards their peers and adults. They do not always show an understanding of the needs of their classmates. Where pupils engage in stimulating, challenging lessons, they demonstrate high levels of empathy towards each other. However, where teaching provides little challenge and pupils cannot see the relevance of their work, there is often little respect shown towards their peers and teachers.
- The student parliament provides many pupils with opportunities to engage in democratic practices. For example, student parliament representatives collate the opinions of their classmates to inform their decisions about which subject areas should receive funding. The student parliament has a real purpose within the school as it has supported the refurbishment of the PE changing rooms and improved catering facilities in light of the feedback from pupils.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They are acutely aware of the dangers posed by the internet and they know what to do if they are approached by a stranger. If they have an issue, they know generally who to go to within school.
- Analysis of records of bullying incidents and pupils' responses to inspectors suggest that bullying has been an issue. However, the school has put in place systems to resolve it and these are being carefully monitored to ensure pupils' safety.
- Sixth-form students participate well in a range of activities and projects with both the school and local community. Students are proactive in supporting younger pupils' reading, writing and mathematics as well as community-based projects.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Staff do not apply the school's behaviour policy consistently. Where the policy is applied correctly and pupils are engaged in lessons, behaviour for learning is good. However, there are too many classes where behaviour for learning impedes pupils' learning and subsequent progress because the policy has not been followed.
- Outside of classes, behaviour is consistently good. Pupils are polite to each other and adults. Pupils form orderly queues in the canteen and use the extensive school grounds

sensibly.

- Overall, pupils' attendance is similar to the national average. The attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved markedly due to the mentoring programme established by the school. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved but remains below the national average.
- The punctuality of pupils to lessons has improved markedly due to the focused tracking and mentoring system. This means that pupils are routinely arriving to their lessons on time and so are able to participate fully in their work.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Progress in English, mathematics, science and a range of other subjects at key stage 4 was below the national average in 2015 and 2016. The progress of disadvantaged pupils at key stage 4 is markedly slower than other pupils nationally. The focus on raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is still not high on the agenda in some subject areas.
- Over time, the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, have not achieved their potential and this trend continues in many areas of the curriculum. Inspectors observed some lessons such as English, media and history where the most able, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, were challenged to extend their understanding, skills and knowledge but this was not consistent in many other subject areas.
- School information for the current Year 11 cohort demonstrates continuing concerns about progress in many areas of the curriculum, particularly in mathematics and science. However, the current progress information for Years 9 and 10 shows marked improvements. Liaison with a range of external organisations such as feeder primaries, local secondary schools and examination board advisers has supported teachers in developing their understanding of the heightened demands of the new GCSE specifications in many areas of the curriculum.
- Pupils are set challenging targets which are now better linked to prior attainment. However, teaching is currently not well linked to these more challenging targets.
- Pupils who have not reached the expected standard at the end of key stage 2 receive targeted support to ensure that they are able to access the key stage 3 curriculum with confidence and understanding. Consequently, the literacy and numeracy skills of pupils at key stage 3 have improved markedly as evidenced by the work inspectors saw in a range of pupils' books.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and /or disabilities receive personalised support to ensure that they make progress across the curriculum. For example, pupils receive targeted one-to-one support and additional resources carefully targeted to support pupils' needs. Currently, their progress is in line with national expectations.
- Disadvantaged pupils with low prior attainment achieve well in some areas of the curriculum such as mathematics. However, disadvantaged pupils with middle or high prior attainment make much less progress than their national counterparts in a range of subject areas including science, mathematics and English.
- The progress of pupils who attend alternative providers is in line with national

expectations.

- Current pupils are making improved progress in some areas of the curriculum but the overall picture is inconsistent. However, the rate of attainment in some subject areas such as English was in line with, or slightly above, national standards.
- The school offers a range of opportunities for careers education, which begins in Year 8, prior to the selection of option subjects at GCSE. Pupils in Year 8 visit a local university to gain an understanding of the demands and opportunities at higher education level. However, pupils told inspectors that they would welcome more information regarding non-academic routes post-Year 11 such as apprenticeships. The impact of careers guidance is not effectively evaluated to inform future strategies.
- The school supported the vast majority of Year 11 pupils to access the next stage of their learning through targeted careers and guidance interviews. Consequently, the school's destination information has improved year on year.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The sixth form offers a broad curriculum with opportunities for students to pursue academic and vocational courses that prepare them well for their next stage in education or work.
- The school offers a highly inclusive sixth form with opportunities for students with relatively low starting points. Many students with low starting points currently make accelerated progress resulting in improved attainment at A level.
- Students' progress on vocational courses is in line with the national average.
- The quality of teaching is robust in most areas of the curriculum. Consequently, students' engagement and motivation to learn are strong. Students develop good independent learning skills. For example, an inspector observed students in a politics A-level lesson applying well-developed research skills to the issue of devolution in the United Kingdom.
- Leaders of the sixth form rigorously evaluate the quality of provision to ensure that students receive robust, challenging support. They have introduced changes to the ways in which students maintain their learning files to ensure more focused study skills. However, it is too early to measure the impact of these changes.
- Many students are involved in mentoring pupils and supporting the learning of pupils in lower years in the school. Additionally, students participate in a range of community-based activities which broaden their understanding and knowledge of life as twenty-first century British citizens.
- In 2015 and 2016, a large proportion of students who retook their GCSE mathematics achieved a grade C. In both English and mathematics, there has been an improvement in retake grades compared with previous years.

School details

Unique reference number	140982
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10031426

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,288
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	248
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Rosemary Lovatt
Headteacher	Stephen Drew
Telephone number	01277 238900
Website	www.bchs.essex.sch.uk
Email address	bchs@bchs.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

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.
- Brentwood County High School converted to academy status in June 2014. This is the school's first inspection report.
- Brentwood Community Academies Trust is the responsible body. The board has appointed a local governing body to oversee the operational work of the school.

- The school is larger than the average secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium funding is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage with small numbers of pupils from a range of different ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of education, health and care plans is above the national average.
- In 2016, the school met the government's published floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons, many jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also made short visits to lessons and looked at pupils' books.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of pupils from various year groups. Discussions with school staff, including senior leaders, middle leaders and four governors, were held.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documents including the school's self-evaluation, information on pupils' outcomes and records relating to monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment, and behaviour and safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of 75 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, alongside responses to staff and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

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Martin Brown	Ofsted Inspector
Phillip Barr	Ofsted Inspector
Cathy Tooze	Ofsted Inspector
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Sally Nutman	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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