

# Burnt Mill Academy

First Avenue, Harlow, CM20 2NR

**Inspection dates** 20–21 November 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b> <b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- This academy is high achieving and provides a first rate environment for learning. It has made substantial and wide-ranging improvements.
- Students' achievement is outstanding because they make excellent progress during their time at the academy and attain well above average results at GCSE.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding so that students make very rapid progress. There is a very positive learning atmosphere in lessons and teachers have high expectations of all students.
- Marking is not consistent across all subjects, so that occasionally students are not exactly clear about how to improve their work.
- Students' behaviour is excellent. They feel very safe, are polite and respectful, and have very positive attitudes to learning.
- The academy is exceptionally well led and managed. The headteacher and senior leaders have tackled previous weaknesses in the quality of teaching and the progress of the students.
- There are excellent procedures for setting demanding targets for students, tracking their progress and providing additional support to ensure their rapid progress.
- Just occasionally, students rely too heavily on adults for support and are not independent enough.
- Governors are fully effective in holding the academy to account for students' progress and the quality of teaching.
- All staff embrace the need for continuous improvement and are committed to sustaining and further raising the outstanding rate of progress and attainment.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 32 lessons, of which four were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, Director of Childrens’ Services, senior leaders, staff and groups of students.
- Inspectors took account of the 132 responses to the ‘Parent View’ online questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of evidence, including the academy evaluation form, the improvement plan, the system to track students’ progress, records relating to behaviour and attendance, lesson observations by senior staff, safeguarding documentation, and a sample of students’ work.

## Inspection team

Stephen Walker, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Concetta Caruana

Additional Inspector

Fatiha Maitland

Additional Inspector

Richard Owen

Additional Inspector

Gay Tattersall

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The large majority of students are from White British backgrounds. There is a small number from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- A larger-than-average proportion of the students are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportions of disabled students and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action, or at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs, are broadly average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The academy has been a specialist performing arts college for over 10 years.
- A small number of Key Stage 4 students take alternative provision at work-based off-site courses with a range of training providers.
- The school has received the Artsmark, International School and Sportsmark awards and has achieved National Healthy Schools status.
- Burnt Mill Academy converted to become an academy school on 1 December 2011. When its predecessor school, Burnt Mill Comprehensive School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged as satisfactory.

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

- Sustain students' outstanding rate of progress and attainment by:
  - using opportunities for further improving teaching through coaching and sharing outstanding practice
  - encouraging students to rely less on adults and work more independently
  - ensuring that marking is consistently effective across all subjects so that students know exactly what they have to do to improve their work.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Attainment at the end of Year 11 is well above average, which demonstrates excellent progress from students' below average starting points. The proportions of students making and exceeding expected progress are high compared with national figures.
- Almost all students gain at least five A\*-C grades at GCSE and 72% of students gain five A\*-C grades including English and mathematics. This indicates a remarkable rise in attainment and represents outstanding progress for the vast majority of students. The small number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds also make outstanding progress.
- High quality teaching is leading to excellent standards and progress in both English and mathematics. The academy's policy is to enter students early in GCSE mathematics and allow them to spend more time on English if they gain their aspirational grade. Both subjects have been particularly imaginative in using their staffing flexibly to provide small teaching groups for a range of students who need additional help with their work.
- The academy has used its specialist status to raise standards extremely well. Students' progress is very strong in the performing arts with grades in dance, drama and music which are now well above the national average. All subjects are supporting the improvements in the academy and are enabling students to make excellent progress and gain high grades at GCSE. The academy has successfully addressed the previous lower achievement in modern foreign languages and business studies. Students who take alternative provision through work-related courses off site benefit from the practical approach they receive and make good progress.
- The well-developed system for tracking student progress is used exceptionally well to identify any students who are at risk of underachieving so that a range of support can be provided. The academy is using additional funding very effectively to narrow the gap between the achievement of students eligible for the pupil premium and the other students. Money is allocated for extra teaching time and teaching assistants for intervention support in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Most disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make outstanding progress in line with their peers. This is because highly effective work from other adults helps them take a full part in lessons with the other students. Students who are supported at school action plus make exceptional progress due to very effective support in class and in small withdrawal groups.
- Students are now given demanding attainment targets in all subjects and this is greatly raising aspirations and supporting the impressive improvements in student performance. All students are aiming to make four levels of progress in each subject between Key Stages 2 and 4. The proportions of students making more than the expected progress from their starting points is now higher than that found nationally.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Much of the teaching is outstanding and it is never less than consistently good, with the result that the students are making exceptional progress over time in most subjects. All teachers set students very demanding progress targets in their subjects and students respond well to these high expectations. Students want to do well and are eager to improve their work and grades.

- The supportive atmosphere in lessons and excellent quality of planning ensures that students are fully engaged in their learning. Students behave very well in classes and this provides a very purposeful atmosphere.
- Lessons involve a range of interesting activities so that students display great enthusiasm and sustain high levels of concentration. Students learn particularly well because activities are very well matched to their different abilities. They offer students challenging and achievable tasks that help them learn.
- Students benefit from the very clear and direct instruction from teachers so that they are well prepared for examinations. Students respond well to this approach and it enables them to make rapid progress in lessons. However, some students are over-reliant on the teachers and not enough teachers encourage students to work more independently.
- Displays in classrooms provide a stimulating environment for learning and celebrate students' work. Teaching assistants are used well to support students who require additional help with their work. There are excellent examples of marking across the academy but there are occasional inconsistencies in a few subjects when it is not fully effective in making sure that students know exactly what they have to do to improve their work.
- Disabled pupils and those who find learning difficult or who have special educational needs are very well supported and challenged by adults in class or withdrawn on a regular basis in small groups for extra help in reading, writing and numeracy. Teaching is excellent in these small group sessions.
- Outstanding teaching was seen when teachers challenged their students with high quality questioning and tasks as well as encouraging them to take greater responsibility for their own learning. For example, Year 10 students were set a number of higher-level tasks in algebra within a time limit and then were asked to mark their work with a partner. Rapid learning took place as students fed back their working to the rest of the class as the teacher challenged them with supportive questions to check and reinforce learning.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- Students' behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around the academy, and this contributes to a calm and orderly environment. Students consistently meet the academy's clear expectations and, typically, students respond well to teachers' good use of praise and encouragement to promote high standards of behaviour.
- Students as a whole are highly proficient in managing their own behaviour in lessons and around the site. For example, students could be trusted to work on their own, move around the corridors and socialise at break and lunchtimes with a reasonable level of supervision.
- Students are considerate, polite and courteous to staff and each other and this has a very positive effect on learning. The house system and buddy system helps younger students fit into the academy quickly and feel welcomed by the other students. Students make every effort to ensure that the other students learn and flourish in an atmosphere of respect and dignity.
- Students are very aware of the different forms of possible bullying such as cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying related to sex, gender, race and disability. Although bullying of any kind is extremely rare, students, parents and carers say any unkind behaviour, such as teasing and

name calling, is dealt with quickly and effectively. Students are actively engaged in supporting the anti-bullying policy and the academy is now a 'Stonewall Diversity Champion', supporting other schools in reducing racist and homophobic bullying.

- The academy makes every effort to ensure students feel safe and secure. Students display an excellent understanding of the issues relating to safety. They talk confidently about how they would keep themselves safe in a variety of situations such as using the internet and talking to strangers. They confirmed that the academy had provided them with detailed information on sex education and the dangers of smoking, alcohol and drugs.
- The vast majority of students are very proud of their academy. Attendance is now above average and reflects students' real enjoyment of the academy. There has been a significant improvement in attendance and reduction in persistent absence.

### **The leadership and management are outstanding**

- The headteacher is providing exceptionally strong and effective leadership, which is driving the significant improvements in the academy. She has introduced rigorous systems for improving teaching, and this is successful in promoting students' excellent progress. She has also taken decisive action to address any inadequate teaching in the academy. All staff are dedicated to the further improvement and continued success of the academy.
- The academy has a very accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. The academy improvement plan is a comprehensive, working document with clear actions and targets that are focused on improving the quality of teaching and the rate of students' progress. Professional development is very effective so that staff are continually reflecting on their practice although the leaders acknowledge that the key challenge is to constantly improve teaching through coaching and sharing outstanding practice.
- The senior leadership team are active in ensuring that the systems to track students' progress are used quickly to spot all students who need extra help and making sure that appropriate intervention support is provided for them. The academy is using the pupil premium funding very effectively to provide extra help for designated pupils who are at risk of underachieving.
- There are regular lesson observations by senior staff which provide clear feedback to teachers on strengths and areas for improvement. Judgements on the quality of teaching are accurate and focus on improving students' learning and progress. The system of setting targets for teachers is rigorous in ensuring that teachers are held to account for the progress of their students. Decisions made about teachers' movements up the salary scale are robustly based on the quality of their teaching and the progress of their students.
- The local authority has greatly supported the headteacher and governors to resolve staffing issues and secure a better quality of teaching across the academy. It has also encouraged the transition to academy status and is presently working with the academy to consider whether it can actively support two feeder primary schools.
- The academy has developed imaginative teaching programmes which are relevant to students' needs and provides a good range of activities. The early start to GCSE courses in Year 9 motivates students and provides additional time for the acquisition of key skills in preparation for examinations. A range of outside visits provide effective extension of the work in lessons, as do the large number of extra-curricular activities, which greatly increase students' enjoyment and experience of the academy. This broad range of experiences contribute exceptionally well to

students' achievements and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is well informed about the academy's progress and areas for development. Its members are fully involved in monitoring progress and in holding the leadership and staff to account. They have been very active in supporting the transition to academy status. Senior leaders ensure that governors have a good understanding about students' achievement in relation to other similar schools and the quality of teaching so that they can make confident decisions on salary progression. Robust procedures for safeguarding meet statutory requirements and underpin the academy's very caring approach. There is a strong commitment to promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination. Governors are proactive in overseeing the use of the pupil premium funding and ensuring that it is effectively spent to support eligible students. Governors ensure they receive the professional training they need to develop further.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137694
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	402766

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1113
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Val Jones
<b>Headteacher</b>	Helena Mills
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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