

Bower Park Academy

Havering Road, Romford, Essex RM1 4YY

Inspection dates

14–15 March 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders, including governors, have taken swift action to deal with the school's weaknesses. A rigorous focus on teaching and learning has had a strong impact on improving standards.
- Leaders know their school well. There are rigorous systems to check quality. The priorities for improvement are realistic and based on reliable evidence.
- Leaders' work to tackle weaknesses has created a positive climate for learning. As a result, staff morale and their commitment to improvement is impressive.
- Pupils' personal development is strong. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills and take responsibility. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are respectful of others, tolerant of those who have different beliefs and lifestyles, polite and courteous.
- Pupils' attitudes to school are positive. They are keen to learn and proud of their school. These factors contribute well to pupils' learning.
- Most teaching enables pupils to make clear progress in their learning. In many subjects, pupils are given work that deepens their knowledge and understanding, regardless of their ability or starting points.
- Pupils reach standards in English and mathematics that are at least average or better. Science standards have improved well so that pupils are now making good progress. Outcomes in other subjects show similar improvements, and standards are at least average.
- Safeguarding is effective. The school has secure arrangements to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Teachers are trained properly and know how to deal with pupils' concerns.
- In some cases, usually in Years 10 and 11, teaching does not challenge disadvantaged or the most able pupils sufficiently. This limits their learning and achievement.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' outcomes, especially those of disadvantaged pupils and the most able, by:
 - ensuring that teachers routinely set work that challenges and stretches all pupils
 - ensuring that the gaps in pupils' learning at key stage 4 are plugged successfully.
- Maintain the focus on strengthening the quality of teaching and learning so that they are of the highest standards across the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders, including governors, are making real and sustained improvements to teaching, learning and pupils' outcomes. This is because leaders tackle the school's weaknesses head-on and are persistent in their drive for quality. This shows the capacity of the school to improve further.
- This drive is especially evident in the way leaders have raised standards of teaching and learning. The thorough process for checking teaching quality is well established. It sets high expectations, and challenges all teachers to improve their practice. Leaders' expectations of teachers are high. Evaluations are based on a broad range of evidence, including work in pupils' books, observations of learning and assessment information. Teachers receive individual targets for improvement. These are sharp and focus directly on pupils' outcomes.
- The rejigging of the school's leadership structure has improved accountability considerably. All staff are held responsible for ensuring that the pupils they teach reach their potential. For example, at regular progress meetings, staff are expected to identify those pupils not doing well enough. Well-focused discussion follows about how to raise standards and to review the targets set.
- The school's arrangements to check the quality of teaching are linked closely to professional development. Where leaders identify common weaknesses, they ensure that teachers are supported with good-quality training and development. For example, recent training has centred on how to ask questions that stretch and challenge pupils. This training is having a noticeable impact on raising the quality of teaching and, thus, learning.
- Leaders' high expectations have helped to create and sustain a strong climate for learning. Raising the morale of staff and pupils has gone hand-in-hand with improving aspirations. Teachers say that professional development is one of the reasons for working at Bower Park. They feel very well supported.
- The procedures to check pupils' progress and identify those who may be falling behind are effective. The analysis of assessment information is comprehensive and sharp. As a result, leaders and governors have reliable evidence of pupils' progress over time. This also ensures that support can be given to the right pupils at the right time.
- The checks made on the progress and well-being of pupils who attend alternative provision is rigorous. This is because the school only uses providers who have been approved by the local authority. Information about pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour is available online, through the local authority.
- The money to support disadvantaged pupils and those in Year 7, who need to catch up with their peers, is used effectively. As a result, the differences between the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally are diminishing steadily. However, some differences remain, and leaders have rightly kept a strong focus on strengthening the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils, as well as the most able.
- The curriculum provides a broad range of experiences that are improving pupils' aspirations. Leaders have thought carefully about how the curriculum can support pupils'

learning and prepare them for the next stage of their education. For example, leaders ensure that, for key stage 3 pupils, there is a balance of experiences, including creative, aesthetic and technological. At key stage 4, the curriculum helps to improve pupils' aspirations and achievements. This is because pupils are given clear advice about which subjects to study, based on reliable information about their achievements so far.

- The range of extra-curricular activities and visits extends pupils' learning well. A variety of sports activities are provided before and after school, and at lunchtimes. These include football, netball, badminton and basketball. There is also a broad range of other activities after school, such as science, music, languages and dance. Visits to the theatre, trips abroad and events, such as an 'equality and diversity' day organised by pupils, broaden pupils' experiences well. In addition, the school's work to raise pupils' aspirations through visits to universities and careers advice is showing significant impact. Nearly half of the current Year 11 pupils are considering university.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective. The citizenship programme in key stage 3 covers a wide range of topics related to pupils' personal development. This ensures that pupils gain a clear understanding of British values. In both key stages 3 and 4, tutorials and assemblies focus on the development of pupils' life skills. The LORIC programme (leadership, organisation, resilience, initiative and communication) contributes well to pupils' personal development. For example, pupils speak positively about taking responsibility and of their commitment to their work.
- The careers education programme ensures that pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education. All pupils, for example, have applied for a place at a sixth-form college, a further education college or for an apprenticeship.
- The arrangements for supporting pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are secure. Leaders spend additional funding appropriately. Pupils needing extra help with their learning are identified quickly and given well-targeted support. As a result, these pupils make at least as good progress as their peers, and sometimes better.

Governance of the school

- Governance has improved significantly since the last inspection. The interim transition board is soon to be replaced by a local governance committee. The appointment of new governors has had a clear impact on the strength of governance. There is a complementary range of expertise, and governors challenge leaders rigorously, holding them to account for the school's performance. Governors have a comprehensive knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This is gained from the thorough information they get from leaders, and their regular visits to the school.
- Governors take their responsibilities for safeguarding seriously. There are suitably rigorous procedures for recruiting and vetting staff. Regular checks by governors of these arrangements mean that record-keeping is up to date and thorough. As a result, governors ensure the welfare and safety of pupils effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- Robust procedures to ensure pupils' safety and well-being demonstrate that safeguarding is a central part of the school's work. The designated leader for safeguarding has established strong partnerships with the local authority's services and, for example, the local 'safer schools' police officer. This means that concerns about pupils are followed up rigorously.
- The measures to help identify pupils experiencing difficulties are comprehensive. Leaders and teachers are vigilant in ensuring that pupils do not fall through the net. There is an increasingly strong provision for pupils' mental health and, for example, the school employs a counsellor to support those needing help. As a result, pupils, including the most vulnerable, are cared for well by the school.
- Policies and guidance are up to date and understood well by staff. Together with regular training and updates, this ensures that staff know how to recognise signs of abuse and the procedures for reporting concerns.
- Pupils say that the school works well to keep them safe through the citizenship programme and assemblies. Parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the school's own survey confirmed that their children feel safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is typically strong. This is the result of a concerted push by leaders to raise the quality of teaching and learning for all pupils. Teaching in mathematics and science was weak at the previous inspection, but has improved considerably over the past year and a half.
- Good relationships between teachers and pupils result in a positive atmosphere in lessons. Clear classroom routines and pupils' positive attitudes means that there is little, if any, disruption to learning. Pupils come to school ready to work. They know how to behave and follow teachers' instructions readily. Pupils are motivated and keen to do well.
- Teachers have suitably high expectations of their pupils. Expectations have improved considerably since the previous inspection. Pupils are often set challenging tasks that extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding. In English, for example, pupils develop their understanding of complex ideas effectively because teaching stretches their thinking. Similarly, in mathematics, pupils are challenged to think about the problem and, as a result, have a depth of understanding that is more than just remembering a formula.
- Leaders have focused on improving the way teachers use questions to stretch and challenge pupils' thinking and understanding. For the most part, this work has been effective. In many cases, teachers use questions to check that pupils have understood a new idea or have a secure grasp of the facts. Where this is successfully implemented, the impact on pupils' progress is significant.
- In many subjects, including English, mathematics and science, work is matched to pupils' different levels of understanding. This is evident in pupils' science books, for example, where pupils are given different tasks that are focused on the same topic. This ensures that all pupils have a secure understanding, before moving on to the next

piece of work or concept. This is also the case in mathematics, and means that pupils are stretched and move on with their work, only when ready to do so.

- The school's assessment system has been comprehensively overhauled. This has resulted in greater consistency across the different subjects and improved feedback to pupils about their work. Pupils commented that they receive good advice from their teachers, which helps them to improve their work. This was clearly evident in pupils' workbooks.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are supported well. Consequently, they make at least similar progress to that of their peers. Small-group work, extra help with reading and after-school sessions have a clear impact on their progress and learning.
- Literacy and numeracy are being developed well across the school. A clear focus on literacy is evident in many subjects, including drama, design and technology, science and the humanities. Mathematical skills are an increasingly important part of pupils' experiences. This is partly because mathematics teaching has improved, but is also the result of other initiatives, such as taking part in national 'maths challenges' and celebrating pupils' achievements.
- Although teaching has improved significantly and is typically good, there are still some weaknesses that limit learning. Occasionally, pupils are given tasks that are not challenging enough or lack enough focus on content. This is because, in teachers' efforts to promote the school's 'active learning' approach, the subject matter sometimes gets lost.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The quality of pastoral care is strong and pupils receive good-quality care. The support and guidance managers, who are responsible for pastoral care, are especially effective in supporting pupils' well-being and personal development. They check pupils' personal and academic development effectively and provide relevant and well-directed support. Pupils talked confidently about going to the support and guidance managers if they had a problem.
- Pupils know about the different types of bullying, including racist and homophobic bullying. Pupils are adamant that bullying is rare and this is confirmed by the school's records.
- The school provides effective opportunities for pupils to take on responsibility. The junior leadership team, for example, enables pupils to contribute towards some of the day-to-day work of the school, such as uniforms or playground equipment. The opportunity for pupils to arrange school events contributes well to pupils' personal development. For example, pupils chose to organise an 'equality and diversity' day. This was effective in giving pupils responsibility and improving their understanding of these concepts.

- There are clear procedures for checking that pupils who attend alternative provision are being supported effectively. The school receives regular information from the providers about pupils' progress and attendance.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' conduct in classrooms and around the school is strong. Pupils say that behaviour has improved a lot in the past year, and they can all explain the system for giving rewards and sanctions. There is little, if any, disruption in lessons, and pupils move around the school in a calm and orderly manner. Behaviour at break and lunchtimes is good.
- Pupils are polite and courteous to adults and each other. They work together particularly well, often helping others to develop their understanding of a particular topic or idea. Despite the difficulties presented by the building, pupils respect the environment, and there is very little litter.
- Overall, attendance levels are similar to the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is less good, and is below the national average for all pupils. However, leaders are tackling this effectively, and attendance for these groups of pupils is rising consistently over time. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is also reducing.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' achievements have improved significantly since the last inspection. Despite the legacy of ineffective teaching, the 2017 GCSE results were an important improvement on those for 2016. Progress in the 2017 GCSE examinations was average.
- When pupils enter the school at the start of Year 7, their achievements are below average overall, although there is a range of ability. From different starting points, pupils currently in the school are making good progress. This is the result of leaders' drive to improve teaching and learning.
- The legacy of ineffective teaching means that gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding are especially evident in Years 10 and 11. Nevertheless, improved teaching has had a noticeable impact on these pupils' achievement and they are making up for lost time successfully. This is confirmed by the school's assessment information, which shows that pupils are increasingly meeting suitably challenging targets.
- Disadvantaged pupils and the most able at key stage 4 are making better progress than in the past. However, they are still not making as much progress as they could, often because of the gaps they have in their learning. Leaders recognise this and rightly continue to focus on driving up standards for these pupils.
- In key stage 3, there is less of a gap in pupils' achievements. Here, the improved teaching ensures that pupils make consistent progress as they move through the school. The school's assessment information shows that disadvantaged pupils make less progress than others nationally, but that it is improving well. The most able pupils

in key stage 3 are also making clear progress in consolidating their knowledge and deepening their understanding. However, this is not always the case, especially where the work is not demanding enough. Nonetheless, the great majority of pupils are on an upward path of achievement.

- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities do well. They do not always reach the same levels as other pupils, but make unmistakable progress from their starting points. As a result, they achieve well.
- Mathematics and science were especially weak at the last inspection. However, the wholesale changes in staff, the drive to improve teaching and support from other schools in the trust have turned these subjects around. Work in pupils' books and the school's assessment information show that pupils are achieving well. The work is mostly challenging, and pupils say that teaching is much improved.
- There are notable successes in other subjects. Pupils do well in English, overall, and their literacy skills are well developed. For example, pupils read well, including those in Year 7 who started school needing extra help. Achievement in creative subjects, such as art and drama, is also strong, and pupils do well in physical education (PE).
- The improvements in outcomes mean that pupils leave school better prepared for the future than at the time of the last inspection. Last year, all pupils moved into education, employment or training when they left school at 16.

School details

Unique reference number	139307
Local authority	Havering
Inspection number	10043262

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 converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	765
Appropriate authority	Interim transition board
Chair	Dave Harries
Headteacher	Stuart McLaughlin
Telephone number	01708 730244
Website	www.bowerpark.co.uk
Email address	mclaughlins@bowerpark.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 December 2016

Information about this school

- Bower Park Academy is smaller than the average-sized school in England. It caters for pupils aged 11 to 16.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive special educational needs support is below average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is average.
- Thirteen pupils currently attend alternative provision on other sites. These include Redbridge College, Barking and Dagenham College, Havering College of Further and Higher Education, Lambourne End Outdoor Centre, Manor Rd, Lambourne End RM4 1NB and Business Enterprise Partnership (BEP Group), 10 Bridge Close Romford.

- The school is part of the Empower Learning Academy Trust.
- A local governing body is currently being established to take over from the interim transition board.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum standards for pupils' progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across all year groups and in most subjects. Many of these were seen jointly with school leaders.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work across the range of subjects.
- Inspectors listened to pupils from Year 7 reading.
- Inspectors looked at behaviour at break and lunchtimes.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, governors, the chief executive of the trust, subject leaders and pupils.
- A wide range of documentation and policies was scrutinised, which included the school's self-evaluation, records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, assessment information and the minutes of the meetings of the interim transition board.
- Inspectors scrutinised records relating to the quality of teaching and the school's website, including information about extra-curricular activities.
- Records, policies and procedures relating to safeguarding were reviewed.
- Inspectors took account of 77 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. There were no written responses.

Inspection team

Brian Oppenheim, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Josephine Dibb

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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