

The Burgess Hill Academy

Station Road, Burgess Hill, West Sussex RH15 9EA

Inspection dates

1–2 May 2019

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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal and his senior team have successfully created an ambitious and forward-looking culture. Staff have raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve, and pupils have broadened their horizons.
- Pupils make overall progress that is in line with or better than that seen nationally in English, mathematics and a range of other subjects. Attainment in English and mathematics has been above national averages for the last two years.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make strong progress from their starting points. However, disadvantaged pupils make less progress from their starting points than other pupils nationally.
- Pupils are well prepared for their next steps. Almost all pupils go on to appropriate courses or apprenticeships when they leave school.
- The majority of teachers plan well to meet the needs of pupils, setting challenging tasks, asking probing questions and giving accurate and timely feedback.
- A legacy of weaker teaching from the predecessor school has resulted in some inconsistencies in the impact of teaching over time on pupils' progress.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are proud of their school and speak confidently to their teachers and each other. Pupils enjoy coming to school.
- Rates of attendance are in line with national averages for secondary schools.
- Pupils' well-being and safety have an extremely high priority in the school. Staff are constantly vigilant for any signs that a child may be distressed or at risk of harm.
- Pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum, as well as a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- While pupils are generally well prepared for life in modern Britain, there are some gaps in what is taught in the personal, social, health and economics (PSHE) education curriculum.
- The University of Brighton Academies Trust (UBAT) and local board provide rigorous oversight of standards, safeguarding and finances. The trust also provides welcome practical support for back-office services and training for teachers.
- Leaders and trust representatives make effective use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND and those who need extra help in English and mathematics to catch up.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school is consistently strong in all subjects by sharing existing effective practice more widely.
- Diminish the remaining differences in rates of progress between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school.
- Strengthen the curriculum and teaching arrangements for PSHE so that pupils are more fully prepared for life in modern Britain.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the school opened in 2016, the principal has worked tirelessly to create an ambitious culture, characterised by raised expectations, improved standards and strong pastoral care. His compelling vision of a school at the heart of the community is shared and promoted vigorously by staff, pupils, parents and carers.
- Subject leaders and those responsible for various aspects of the school's work play a crucial role in improving the quality of teaching, in ensuring that pupils make strong progress and in supporting pupils' well-being. Many of the very promising initiatives that they have developed, for example on providing feedback to pupils, are relatively recent and so their full impact has yet to be seen.
- Staff at the school feel valued. Almost all of those who responded to Ofsted's survey indicated that they are proud to work at the school. Many expressed their appreciation of what the school does to reduce their workload. One member of staff wrote, 'It's been a breath of fresh air to be encouraged to do what we do best.'
- Leaders have made effective use of the resources available from the trust to provide staff with training opportunities and additional resources that are relevant to their needs. For example, experts from the University of Brighton and from other trust schools have worked alongside staff at the school to help them to improve their teaching and leadership skills. Teachers and other staff welcome these opportunities.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils study the full range of national curriculum subjects during the three years of key stage 3. At key stage 4, around one third of pupils are entered for the English Baccalaureate. The principal is committed to increasing this figure. However, the school continues to face challenges in recruiting teachers of modern foreign languages. Consequently, the proportion of pupils entered for GCSE examinations in modern languages remains below the national average.
- Leaders have made sure that pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including lunchtime and after-school clubs, trips linked to their academic studies and the chance to be involved in sporting and cultural events. Pupils enjoy these opportunities and participate well in them.
- Leaders make strong provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. At the time of the inspection, pupils were excited about the forthcoming production of 'Annie', while others enjoyed taking part in the recent 'Voice in a Million' singing project. The school is committed to working with the local community, and pupils have many opportunities to play an active role in the locality, for example when raising money for local charities.
- Generally, the school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain through assemblies, lessons and visiting speakers. Through their curriculum, pupils learn about other cultures and beliefs and learn to empathise with people less fortunate than themselves. A Year 8 pupil said when talking about the plight of refugees, 'It really grips the heart.' However, although staff have had the appropriate training, leaders have not ensured that pupils are well informed enough about the dangers of extremism and radicalisation.

- Additional funding to support the progress of pupils with SEND, those who are disadvantaged and those who need extra help to catch up in English and mathematics is used effectively. Leaders base their spending decisions on a careful analysis of individual pupils' needs and they evaluate the impact of those decisions on pupils' academic progress, attendance and well-being.
- Parents are supportive of the school. Over 95% of those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to others. Many praised the positive changes they have seen at the school. For example, one parent wrote:

'I feel that The Burgess Hill Academy is a well-led school with good teachers. They are very responsive to parents and value the students who attend. Communication is good, we receive lots of emails and the parent forums are positive.'
- Some parents expressed concern about the provision for pupils with SEND and about homework. School leaders and local board members agree that arrangements for homework need to be reviewed, and have undertaken to do this.

Governance of the school

- The trust board exercises strong strategic oversight of finances and standards. Through a series of well-established and well-run committees, the board has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Since becoming a member of the trust, standards in the school have risen and financial controls have improved.
- The trust ensures rigorous challenge and support to the principal through the deployment of an external improvement partner who reports to the trust's executive director for school improvement.
- The school benefits from effective support provided by the trust for business management, estates and facilities, human resources management and safeguarding. The trust has also made available additional funding, as well as resources and training opportunities for staff.
- The local board provides a crucial link with the community that the school serves. The local board provides effective challenge and support for safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, and pupils' personal development and welfare.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school provides a caring and nurturing environment in which pupils can thrive. Recognising an increased need for emotional and mental health support among pupils, leaders have rightly increased provision in this area.
- Arrangements for staff training and systems for reporting safeguarding concerns are thorough. Staff confirm that they have a broad understanding of the main risks to pupils. Staff are confident that they can recognise the signs that a pupil may be suffering harm and that they know what to do if they have any safeguarding concerns.

- Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding carry out their responsibilities diligently. They have cultivated productive relationships with local agencies and are tenacious in following up all and any child protection referrals that they make.
- The checks carried out on the suitability to work with children of all those who work or volunteer in the school follow published guidelines and are carried out efficiently and well.
- Local board members and trustees have all undertaken appropriate safeguarding training and they use this training to provide effective monitoring and oversight of child protection policies and procedures in the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good because teaching is effective in meeting pupils' needs and enabling them to make strong progress over time.
- The majority of teachers use their expert subject knowledge to plan interesting schemes of work that are well matched to what pupils already know and can do. Activities set contain appropriate levels of challenge, and teachers are careful to ensure that pupils have mastered basic skills before tackling more difficult work. For example, careful sequencing of material over time enabled high-attaining Year 9 pupils to talk convincingly about how authors convey meaning.
- Most teachers make effective use of questioning to deepen pupils' understanding. For example, in a Year 10 drama lesson, skilful questioning enabled pupils to draw on their prior knowledge to stage their own scenes in the style of the playwright Bertolt Brecht.
- Teachers provide pupils with feedback in line with the school's recently revised policy. Pupils value the advice their teachers give them on how to improve their work and the time they are given to put the advice into practice. For example, in art, Year 10 pupils made strong progress when drawing portraits because the verbal feedback they were given was precise enough for them to act on immediately.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are cordial and warm. Pupils are punctual to lessons, and well-established routines mean that very little time is lost as pupils move between activities in class. Pupils show considerable levels of resilience and willingness to 'have a go'. For example, in talking about forthcoming GCSE examinations, a Year 11 pupil said that the eventual grade was not the most important thing but, rather, 'knowing that I have worked hard and done my best'.
- Teachers deploy teaching assistants well. Teaching assistants provide effective support to pupils who need additional help.
- Leaders have acted with determination to bring about significant improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment since the school became an academy. However, there remains a small amount of variability in how well teaching meets pupils' needs over time. For example, in a very small number of cases, the work pupils are given to do is not well tailored to their needs and so they do not develop secure skills, knowledge and understanding.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils in all year groups display very positive attitudes to their school and their learning. They are confident and articulate, and they take great delight in explaining the work they have been doing. They are proud of their school and play their part in keeping the site tidy and litter-free.
- Pupils seize the many opportunities the school provides for them to develop their interests and aptitudes. For example, pupils can choose to learn musical instruments or take part in the various singing and instrumental clubs. The annual drama production is already a highlight of the calendar after just two years. Pupils enjoy sport and appreciate the extensive facilities they have use of.
- Leaders help pupils to be resilient and resourceful. For example, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award has recently been introduced to the school, and pupils' participation in it is encouraging.
- Diversity is celebrated at this school. Pupils are kind to each other and respectful of people and groups, regardless of their particular characteristics, for example their gender, race or sexual orientation.
- Provision for pupils who may be experiencing emotional or mental health difficulties is exceptionally strong. Vulnerable pupils receive strong and caring support from staff and fellow pupils.
- Pupils are valuable members of their community, taking part in a wide range of fundraising and local events.
- Pupils know how to stay safe in and out of school, including when using the internet or social media. Pupils agree that there is someone in school they can talk to if they are worried about anything. However, there are some gaps in their understanding of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation.
- Pupils say that bullying, including racist and homophobic bullying, is rare. They have full confidence in their teachers to deal with any such incidents that might occur.
- A very small number of pupils attend a local pupil referral unit. Teachers liaise closely with the alternative provider to ensure that pupils are safe, attending well and making strong progress in their learning.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves sensibly in lessons and around the school. In class, they pay attention and get down to work quickly. In the dining hall and playground, they act in a mature and adult way. Very occasionally, there is unwanted chatter in lessons, usually when the work set is not well matched to pupils' needs.
- Fixed-term exclusions, particularly for pupils with SEND, have fallen sharply in the last year.

- Pupils enjoy coming to school, as shown by their good attendance overall. Rates of attendance for disadvantaged pupils are improving. Leaders work closely with those families whose children do not come to school regularly enough. Leaders build relationships with families and go 'the extra mile' to remove barriers to attendance, using pupil premium funding to good effect where appropriate. There is evidence that their patient work is paying off, and some pupils with previously poor attendance records are now in school more regularly.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Published results for the last two years show that pupils made overall progress that was in line with national averages, while their attainment was above that seen nationally. Pupils' progress and attainment scores in English and mathematics were higher in 2018 than 2017.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND improved between 2017 and 2018. Although the difference between rates of progress of disadvantaged pupils and those of other pupils nationally diminished in those two years, it remains wide. High-attaining pupils made strong progress in 2018.
- Pupils' progress in English, mathematics and a range of other subjects was in line with or, as in the case of humanities, better than, that seen nationally in 2018.
- Standards are rising for current pupils across the school in many subjects because subject leadership and teaching have improved. Over time, pupils in all year groups are making more sustained progress than in the past. However, where the quality of teaching within and between subjects over time is less strong, pupils' rates of progress vary.
- Although a legacy of weaker teaching continues to have an adverse impact on the progress of some pupils in key stage 4, they and their teachers demonstrate a shared determination to overcome barriers and address any gaps in knowledge, particularly in English, mathematics, humanities and science.
- Pupils with SEND generally make good progress because, ably supported by the special educational needs coordinator, teachers plan well to meet their pupils' needs, and teaching assistants provide timely and effective support.
- Additional funding is used well to help pupils who started Year 7 with below-average attainment in English and mathematics to catch up quickly.
- Teachers take the development of pupils' literacy skills seriously, and every opportunity is taken across the curriculum to promote pupils' reading, writing and speaking skills. Consequently, pupils read fluently during lessons and in tutor time, and relish the opportunity to discuss their learning with their teachers and with each other.
- Pupils are prepared well for their next steps. Almost all pupils go on to appropriate destinations and courses at local colleges and apprenticeship providers.

School details

Unique reference number	142089
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10088099

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	805
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Chris Pole
Principal	Jon Francies
Telephone number	01444 241 691
Website	www.theburgesshillacademy.org.uk
Email address	office@theburgesshillacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened as a sponsored academy in September 2016.
- The school's sponsor is UBAT.
- Governance of the school is provided by the board of trustees, which delegates some responsibilities to the local board.
- A very small number of pupils attend the West Sussex Alternative Provision Centre for all or part of the week.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 47 lessons and six tutor periods. Almost all visits were carried out jointly with school leaders.
- Meetings were held with leaders responsible for various aspects of the school's work, including teaching and learning, the curriculum, behaviour and attendance, and careers.
- Inspectors also met with leaders responsible for the progress of pupils with SEND, those who are disadvantaged and those in Year 7 who need additional help to catch up.
- The lead inspector held discussions with the principal, as well as with the vice-chair of the local board and representatives from UBAT.
- The views of pupils were taken into account through informal conversations and formal meetings, and by reviewing the 39 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- The views of staff were taken into account by holding meetings with a group of staff and a group of middle leaders, and by analysing the 50 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Inspectors reviewed the 282 responses and 111 written comments to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- Inspectors scrutinised a sample of pupils' work and reviewed a range of documents made available by the school, including leaders' self-evaluation and the school improvement plan.
- A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the West Sussex Alternative Provision Centre.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding procedures at the school by scrutinising documents, examining staff recruitment practices and meeting two of the school's designated safeguarding leads.

Inspection team

Gary Holden, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Philip Storey	Ofsted Inspector
Eliot Hodges	Ofsted Inspector
Colin Lankester	Ofsted Inspector

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