

The Business Academy Bexley

Yarnton Way, Erith, Kent DA18 4DW

Inspection dates	11–12 May 2016
Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Early years provision	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Outcomes for pupils in the secondary section are inadequate. Progress is too slow across the curriculum, including in English and mathematics.
- White British pupils, and boys in particular, make poor progress.
- The quality of teaching is inadequate. Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. A significant number of teachers are temporary and this also inhibits pupils' progress.
- Assessment across the school is disjointed and incoherent. Teachers are not consistent in the way that they evaluate pupils' work.
- Management policies and practices are weak. Consequently, self-evaluation is inaccurate and does not recognise the school's weaknesses.
- Financial constraints have led to reductions in provision, including for pupils who have special educational needs or disability. Leaders do not account properly for additional funding, including that allocated to support disadvantaged pupils.
- Systems for managing teachers' performance are weak. Targets for improvement are not linked sufficiently to the quality of teaching. Staff are not held accountable for pupil outcomes.
- In the secondary school, poor teaching leads to unacceptable behaviour from pupils. Too much poor behaviour goes unchallenged by teachers.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, have presided over the school's decline since the previous inspection.

The school has the following strengths

- Although both require improvement, provision in the early years and the sixth form is better than in the rest of the school.
- Safeguarding is effective. Good links exist with external agencies to protect vulnerable pupils.
- The new head of primary has made a promising start. The acting principal has provided stability during a challenging time for the school.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Undertake a root-and-branch review of management across the school, including improvement planning, the use of additional funding, performance management of staff, school self-evaluation, and the tracking and analysis of pupil progress.
- Ensure that leadership teams in the primary and secondary sections have the experience and capacity necessary to achieve rapid improvement in all aspects of the school's performance, including in mathematics.
- Ensure that stable and competent teaching is provided in all subject areas across the school, including in mathematics, so that the daily learning experienced by pupils is challenging and strongly develops their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Raise standards across all phases of the school so that pupils' progress is at least good across all subjects and key stages, and that any gaps between the achievements of key groups of pupils are eliminated rapidly.
- Ensure that White British pupils across the school make progress that is at least in line with the national averages for all pupils.
- Ensure that pupils who have special educational needs or disability are appropriately supported throughout the school in a way that enables them to make good progress in their academic studies.
- Ensure that pupils' work is assessed in a consistent, coherent way across all key stages and all subjects.
- Ensure that all staff are trained in behaviour management and that all instances of poor pupil behaviour are immediately and consistently challenged.
- Continue to reduce persistent absence so it is below the national averages for primary and secondary pupils.
- Continue to reduce exclusions so these are also below the national averages for primary and secondary pupils.

An external review of governance should be conducted.

An external review of pupil premium spending should be conducted.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Policies and procedures for managing the school are ineffective. The school development plan does not prioritise the crucial actions needed to improve teaching and pupils' outcomes; neither does it provide clear targets for holding leaders to account. While leaders speak of their ambition for the school, everyday classroom culture does not promote high enough expectations for pupils' achievement.
- The leadership of teaching is inadequate. Leaders have been unable to provide pupils with high-quality teaching. Leaders' checks on teachers' performance are not rigorous. The effectiveness of staff training and professional development is limited.
- In practice, the timetabled curriculum provides an appropriate breadth of subjects. However, other than for English and mathematics, curriculum planning is not coordinated across the primary section. The new head of primary is developing a comprehensive curriculum plan for all subjects, but this will not take effect until September 2016. At present, curriculum coverage across other subjects is haphazard. Inspectors were told that the secondary curriculum plan is currently being revised, but leaders were unable to show evidence of this. Minimal information is provided about the curriculum on the school website and no information is given about the 2015 examination results. The website lists a small range of extra-curricular activities; pupils say that they would like more, including trips out of school.
- The school's analyses of the pupil premium and primary sports premium funding are vague. Little detail is given as to how the secondary funding is spent and there is no evaluation of this funding's impact on pupil outcomes. The school has recently employed three mathematics consultants to work with classes and provide Saturday morning interventions, but these have been aimed at all pupils and not just those who are eligible for funding. However, inspectors did see some good use being made of the secondary intervention room for pupils who need individualised help with English and mathematics.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is promoted through some wall displays around the school, but in both primary and secondary sections this work requires improvement. Pupils understand what it is to live in a diverse society. Pupils from different backgrounds get on well with each other, but the small amount of racist language heard during the inspection is unacceptable. It does not promote British values well, nor does it reflect the school's positive promotion of diversity. The school's SMSC audit, published on the website, is confined to the primary section. Parts of the school building, including classrooms and wall displays, are untidy and do not project high standards. Litter has been allowed to build up around the school site. This negates the impact of the on-site renewable energy generators and the flagship building, which is already starting to show signs of external wear. Inspectors saw exercise and text books, pupils' shoes and other items of litter that appeared to have been thrown out of windows in the secondary school building.
- The recently appointed head of primary has, in the four weeks since she took up post, made positive changes to the teaching of English and mathematics. She has also started to plan changes to the wider curriculum in key stages 1 and 2. It is to the acting principal's credit that he accepted the unexpected challenge of leading the school. He has an honest recognition of the school's inadequacies and a deep commitment to the school and its pupils. He has provided stability at a difficult time. However, the challenges facing the school are deep-seated and require much greater depth of leadership than can be provided by two people. The teams supporting the head of primary and the acting principal, while also committed, do not have the collective leadership experience that the school needs. Too many are recently promoted to temporary roles. Further changes are due at the end of this term, when a number of senior and middle leaders are leaving the school in both the primary and secondary sections.
- Too many teachers are temporary, or engaged on a supply basis. Inspectors recognise that, for the school to improve, it is important for the school to build a stable team of permanently employed staff. Current newly qualified teachers told inspectors that they felt well supported by school leaders. It is recommended that governors ensure any newly qualified teachers appointed for September are offered support from experienced, expert teachers and are only placed in departments with strong subject leadership.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Corporately, the governing body has presided over the school's decline since the last inspection. It has not ensured that management systems are fit for purpose, including the award of pay increases to staff. Governors have not provided sufficient challenge to information provided by school leaders.

- Since his appointment, the current chair of governors has provided greater challenge to the previous principal and the acting principal. He is aware of the school’s inadequacies and has brokered leadership support from an external consultant. While this has provided guidance and mentoring, there is too much dependence on external support to demonstrate that the school currently has the necessary capacity for improvement.
- Since the Financial Notice to Improve was issued, a number of savings have been made, including staff restructuring and changes to the way that services and goods are bought. However, it is surprising that the governing body has not provided greater challenge about the use of additional funding such as the pupil premium, given the school’s results and the poor quality of analysis provided by leaders.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are appropriately trained, suitable processes are in place, all necessary checks are made and when concerns arise they are dealt with properly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- The assessment of pupils’ work is inadequate. Leaders have been slow to develop a whole-school strategy for assessing pupils’ work, with the consequence that different systems and methods are used by different teachers. In places where national curriculum levels are still being used, they are not being applied in an accurate or consistent manner. Not enough use is made of questioning to assess how much pupils know and what can be done to help them understand more.
- Systems for tracking pupils’ work are incoherent in both the primary and secondary sections. This is acknowledged by school leaders. Although the new head of primary has made some improvements during her short time in post, there is still inconsistency in primary assessment. She has quickly brought better consistency to the teaching of English and mathematics but recognises that there is more to be done in the teaching of other subjects. In the secondary section, the assessment policy is confined to guidance about written marking and feedback; this guidance is not appropriate to all areas of the curriculum and in any case is not followed consistently by staff.
- New exercise books have been introduced in the primary section since the new head of primary took up her post. Comparing these with last term’s books, a clear improvement can be seen in teachers’ expectations for good presentation and the amount of work completed.
- The presentation of much work in the secondary section is poor; this is not challenged by teachers but, rather, accepted as the norm. Pupils are not encouraged to take pride in their work. The emphasis is often on the completion of tasks, rather than on producing quality work. In too many lessons, there is insufficient urgency; pupils become disengaged because they are not challenged. Too many books seen by inspectors were dishevelled and uncared for.
- While better than in the secondary section, teaching in the primary school is still variable. Teaching is not always pitched at a consistently high enough level to enable pupils to make good progress.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is not good enough. The support provided for these pupils in class is too variable. In some classes visited in the primary and secondary sections, no additional support was provided and pupils were struggling. When they are present, teaching assistants do not always do enough to help pupils learn. The transition class provides smaller groups and closer nurture for some of the most vulnerable pupils in Year 7, and this is very helpful in promoting their confidence and well-being. However, the quality of teaching in this class is not as strong as the pastoral care provided.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Despite the poor behaviour seen in secondary classes when teaching fails to challenge, pupils told inspectors that they wanted to learn. They said that they were concerned about their lack of learning and progress. Older pupils are rightly concerned that too many of their teachers are temporary and that this has a negative impact on their learning.
- Older pupils report that they are well informed and aware of different types of bullying and grooming, including online intimidation and exposure to extremist ideas. Younger pupils know who to turn to if they

have concerns about bullying and have had road safety training. Although they have had teaching about internet safety, they say that they would like more.

- One particular strength of the school is the work done to build the confidence of the most vulnerable pupils. The school takes good care of those pupils who are at risk. Good links have been developed with local organisations to protect pupils from the risks of gang violence and child sexual exploitation. The correct procedures are followed when any concerns are reported, and good links exist with external agencies in respect of child protection.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Inspectors witnessed too many incidents of poor behaviour in secondary lessons and instances where pupils became disengaged in learning. Almost all of these cases were related to poor teaching. Where teachers had not established purposeful working environments or had not provided adequately challenging work, pupils became demonstrably dissatisfied. Furthermore, these teachers did not challenge poor behaviour and foul or racist language when it occurred. Although inspectors did not believe that this behaviour was premeditated, on too many occasions it added to the lack of learning. Other pupils who are keen to learn find this poor behaviour and inadequate classroom management completely unacceptable. They are right.
- Although the great majority of primary pupils play together harmoniously, some older pupils have disagreements, run around at speed or play roughly. This worries some younger pupils. Inspectors judged that pupils were able to stay safe on the playground, but agreed that more could be done to manage better behaviour at playtimes. Secondary pupils' behaviour in and around the school building is acceptable although, again, occasionally over-boisterous. Many, though, are polite and socialise well together at breaktimes.
- While the number of exclusions for poor behaviour remains above average, it has decreased since the start of this academic year. Attendance is broadly average. While also decreasing, the number of pupils who are persistently absent remains much higher than the national average in both the primary and secondary sections.
- Leaders make regular checks on the attendance and behaviour of those attending alternative provision, to ensure that they are kept safe.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- Pupils' development is below average when they join the school. At all ages, from the early years to Year 11, their progress and attainment remain below average. This means that, whenever they move on to the next stage of their lives, they are not adequately prepared.
- The 2015 Year 6 cohort achieved results that were significantly below average in mathematics and reading. Information provided by the school suggests that, in English and mathematics, the current Year 6 pupils are set to do better than last year. However, information about some other year groups is less positive, particularly Years 1 and 3. Although small in number, the most able pupils are making much less progress than their peers throughout key stage 2. This variability in progress across the primary section was confirmed by inspectors' observations in lessons.
- The progress made by pupils in the secondary section is inadequate. Notwithstanding the fact that the school is non-selective in a local area where the most able pupils go to selective schools, pupils make inadequate progress by the time they finish Year 11.
- Progress in secondary English and mathematics is inadequate. The 2015 examination results showed pupils' overall progress was significantly lower than it should have been. The proportion of pupils making expected progress in both subjects was below average. All groups made poor progress, including those who attend alternative provision. The most able pupils made even less progress than their peers. White British pupils, who made up nearly half the year group, made exceptionally poor progress.
- The school's assessment information for current Year 6 pupils suggests that disadvantaged pupils are making less progress than their peers, particularly in mathematics. In secondary English and mathematics, the gaps in attainment and progress between disadvantaged and other pupils widened between 2014 and 2015.

- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability do not make enough progress. Published information about the 2015 examination results showed that, in the primary section, these pupils made significantly less progress than the rest of the year group. This was also the case in the secondary section.
- The school's predictions for the current Year 11 suggest that, again, pupils' progress will be significantly below expectations in all areas. This includes science and humanities subjects, where progress is predicted to be poor. The underachievement seen by inspectors in pupils' books confirmed that outcomes in the secondary section are inadequate for all groups, including those who have special educational needs or disability and those who are disadvantaged.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development was very low in 2015. The school's predictions for 2016 are much better but are still below average. Children are not prepared for Year 1 as well as they should be. Nearly half of all children join speaking English as an additional language; however, the group that makes the least progress is the White British boys.
- Teaching in the early years is better than across the school as a whole. The contribution of teaching assistants and nursery nurses is a strength. Learning and play resources in the outdoor learning area have been improved since the last inspection. However, this area is not used until 11.30am every day and this restricts children's development, particularly for those who learn best outside.
- Children make good progress in reading, through their understanding of phonics (the sounds that letters make). This is much improved and has been helped by the involvement of parents in 'Family Phonics' sessions. However, these improved reading skills have not led to similar improvements in writing. Work in mathematics is varied; inspectors' observations of children's work showed that, again, boys' progress is slower than that of girls.
- The acting early years leader has a realistic and accurate understanding of children's progress. As with other parts of the primary section, the new head of primary has correctly identified where improvements are needed.
- Behaviour in the early years is better than in the school as a whole. Safeguarding in the early years is effective. Children are provided with a safe and secure environment in which they enjoy learning and playing.

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- Given their lower-than-average GCSE results when they joined the sixth form, students made the progress expected of them in the 2015 A-level and vocational examinations. Performance in vocational courses was better than in academic subjects. The school was unable to provide inspectors with information about the progress of current Year 13 students. There are some notable strengths in sixth-form leadership, including improving outcomes for students over the past three years and the way in which leaders have fostered a positive sixth-form culture. However, as in the main school, systems for assessing and tracking students' progress are underdeveloped. Similarly, the quality and quantity of information about the sixth-form curriculum and other important aspects of sixth-form life on the school website is limited.
- Pass rates in GCSE retakes are better in English than they are in mathematics, although the school recognised that these required improvement in both subjects. Results from the November 2015 resits indicate that the pass rate in mathematics is improving.
- Given the size of the sixth form, a good range of academic A levels and vocational courses is offered. Class sizes are relatively small, meaning that students can benefit from closer attention. Working relationships in lessons are generally very positive. While there is some strong teaching which sets high standards and engages students well, in other instances expectations are too low and students are not challenged when they produce work that is not good enough. This variability in teaching is a key reason why students do not make better than expected progress.
- The senior intervention tutor and an on-site careers adviser coordinate careers guidance effectively. The school offers a work experience programme for all Year 12 students together with a work skills programme that helps with access to future employment.

- The head of sixth form has worked hard to develop the culture and ethos of the sixth form, particularly in developing students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Their respect for diversity and preparation for life in modern Britain is strong. Students behave well when they are in school. However, attendance in both Year 12 and Year 13 is not good enough, with students missing one in every ten days.
- The latest published figures show that just over two thirds of Year 12 students continue their studies into Year 13. The school's information indicates that almost all Year 13 students progressed to education, employment or training opportunities when they left the sixth form in 2015, with three quarters going on to university courses.

School details

Unique reference number	133769
Local authority	Bexley
Inspection number	10017480

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	All-through
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,423
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	136
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Elms
Acting Principal	Niall Fallon
Telephone number	0208 320 4800
Website	www.thebusinessacademy.org
Email address	contact@tbc.bexley.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 March 2013

Information about this school

- This is an all-through school, with a primary section that includes early years provision and a secondary section that includes provision for pupils aged 16 to 19. A privately run nursery is also located on the school site and this is inspected separately.
- The current chair of governors took up post in September 2015, after previously serving on the governing board for four years. The principal, who was appointed after the last inspection, resigned unexpectedly at the end of the autumn term 2015. The vice-principal, with responsibility for the secondary school, was asked to step up as acting principal. Following the retirement of the previous post holder, the head of primary took up her post in April 2016.
- The school uses a number of alternative providers, including 'Right Choice', 'Breakthrough', 'Full Circle Education', 'Wize Up', Newhaven Pupil Referral Unit and 'Construct', an off-site vocational unit that is run by the school and is also inspected separately.
- The school meets the current government floor standards which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment.
- The academy does meet requirements for the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors made visits to 66 lessons where they looked at pupils' work in books and files, observed pupils learning and considered the impact of teaching. Some of these visits were made jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors looked at a range of management documents, including attendance records, exclusion logs and assessment information. Meetings were held with senior leaders, heads of department and a group of newly qualified teachers. Inspectors spoke to pupils in small group meetings, in lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors considered 22 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

Inspection team

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