

# The Gateway Academy

Marshfoot Road, Grays, Essex RM16 4LU

## Inspection dates

28–29 March 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, pupil progress, including that of disadvantaged pupils, has declined. The school is no longer outstanding.
- The progress pupils make, including those who are disadvantaged, is variable. This is particularly the case in the humanities subjects.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies across subjects and year groups.
- Teachers do not routinely plan learning that challenges most-able pupils to excel. In some classes, expectations of what these pupils can achieve are not sufficiently high.
- Since the previous inspection, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have not achieved as well as they should. A small number do not attend as well as they should.
- Teachers do not have consistently high expectations of how pupils should present their work. This results in some untidy work going unchallenged.
- Some teachers do not provide feedback in line with the school's policy. As a result, in these classes, pupils do not have a clear understanding of how to improve their work.
- Leaders are improving the school, but it is not yet good.

### The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has swiftly and accurately identified the actions that need to be taken to improve the school. Supported well by other leaders, she is skilfully bringing about the necessary changes to accelerate the progress pupils make.
- The governing body supports and challenges leaders well. Governors share the headteacher's ambition and determination to bring about sustainable improvement.
- Pupils are safe and well cared for. They appreciate the work of adults in the school. Relationships between adults and children are good.
- Leaders have worked successfully to improve pupil behaviour in lessons and around the school site. Very many pupils behave well.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well provided for.

## Full report

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

- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching, learning and assessment by teachers:
  - planning learning that enables all groups of pupils, including the most able and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, to make at least good progress
  - providing precise and effective feedback on pupils' work to help pupils understand what they need to do to improve
  - insisting on all pupils presenting their work to a high standard.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - continuing to develop the effectiveness with which additional funds to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are used, so that more make at least good progress and the attendance of this group improves
  - accelerating the rate of school improvement so that more pupils make good progress and reach the standards expected.
- Improve outcomes by:
  - accelerating the work to ensure that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make more rapid progress, in particular in the humanities subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have not ensured that pupils achieved as well as they should. Outcomes in the last three years have been low. As a result, the school no longer retains its outstanding judgement.
- The headteacher, now in her second year in post, leads with skill and resolve. Supported well by other leaders, she has successfully established a collegiate can-do culture through which the significant underachievement of the recent past is being challenged and overcome. There is a palpable desire to improve the school. Consequently, pupils' progress is improving, although it is not yet good. The large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that the school is well led and managed.
- Leaders have a precise understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have identified the actions needed to bring about the necessary improvements and set about these with considerable energy. They rightly prioritised improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and also improving pupils' behaviour. In these they are being successful.
- The headteacher has high expectations of her staff. She correctly refuses to allow poor practice to go unchallenged and manages leaders' and teachers' performance well by setting clear targets and holding staff robustly to account. Teachers, teaching assistants and middle leaders told inspectors that they appreciate the clarity of expectation that the headteacher has brought to the school. Staff morale is high. Almost all of the 75 adults who responded to the online survey understand the school aims and very many consider the school to be well led and managed. One adult commented, 'We are all together', and their peers agreed.
- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment carefully and use this information to provide teachers with high-quality training. Teachers say that they are supported well and inspection evidence supports their views. Despite the headteacher's unrelenting efforts and those of the chief executive of The Gateway Learning Community Trust, they have been unsuccessful in recruiting to some teaching positions. As a consequence, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, while much improved in the past 12 months, remains variable.
- Subject leaders are effective in their work. They share the headteacher's determination to bring about improvements and are trusted and empowered to do so. For example, as a result of subject leaders' changes to the curriculum in mathematics, English, science, physical education and the arts, there has been an increase in pupils' interest and progress.
- In the past year, leaders have carefully reshaped the curriculum to ensure that pupils have equality of opportunity and the chance to make good progress. For example, additional funding to support pupils who need to catch up is used well, as leaders have ensured that pupils who join the school in key stage 3 are provided with the additional literacy support they need. Pupils in key stage 4 can access the school's 'additional

learning programme for support'. Leaders acknowledge that these changes have not had time to have a full impact on the progress that pupils make.

- School leaders have successfully ensured that opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding are woven throughout the curriculum. For example, pupils explained how, through learning about a variety of faiths and cultures, they are 'learning to be open-minded' and 'understand the importance of not judging people'. Pupils described how the school's 'deep learning days' have fired their enthusiasm for subjects such as science. The impressive displays of pupils' artwork in the corridors reflect the breadth of cultures that pupils study. The curriculum is enriched by activities and clubs such as those in engineering, sports and the arts, as well as by links with a school in Sri Lanka.
- Leaders are making progressively more effective use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. The school has employed specialist 'coaches' (adults who work with disadvantaged pupils) to develop the self-confidence and ambition of these pupils. As a consequence of this work, disadvantaged pupils are making better (although not consistently good) progress in some subjects. However, this is not the case in other subjects, such as humanities. Leaders acknowledge that they need to review the impact of their work in this area more often and with greater precision so that disadvantaged pupils are able to make even more rapid progress.
- The leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving. The funding to support them is increasingly well spent. These pupils' needs are accurately identified and progressively well met. For example, through the development of the school's 'curriculum plus' (provision which provides specific support for pupils who need it) and amendments to the support these pupils receive, they are making better, although variable, progress.

## **Governance of the school**

- Over the past year, governors have been led by an experienced and knowledgeable chair of the governing body. She has quickly gained an overview of the quality of education provided and has rightly taken action to ensure that governors provide appropriate challenge and support to school leaders. The governance of the school has improved and is strong.
- Inspection evidence demonstrates that governors ask pertinent questions from the wealth of information that leaders provide. Governors challenge leaders about the progress of different groups of pupils, paying particular attention to the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Governors and trustees visit the school to assure themselves of the quality of education being provided. They have an accurate understanding of what is going on in school, including the safeguarding arrangements that are in place.
- Governors and trustees set robust performance management targets for the headteacher that are appropriately aligned to both the school's priorities and individual staff needs.

## Safeguarding

- Leaders, including governors, have ensured that arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils told inspectors that they were happy and safe in their school. They explained that they respect and value the adults who work with them. These positive relationships add to the sense of security that exists.
- Pupils know what bullying is and explained that it is not a frequent occurrence at their school. They explained that, were bullying to occur, it would be dealt with swiftly and well by adults.
- Leaders ensure that staff have an up-to-date knowledge of relevant safeguarding aspects, including those relating to the government's 'Prevent' duty. As a result, staff are alert to their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe. Adults demonstrate a detailed understanding of how to identify if a pupil is vulnerable or at risk.
- Staff report concerns in line with the school policy and expressed confidence that senior leaders will deal with any concerns appropriately and well. Inspection evidence demonstrates that leaders take appropriate actions when a child is vulnerable or at risk. Leaders keep careful and detailed records of their actions.
- Governors and trustees ensure that leaders carry out the necessary recruitment checks on adults when they begin their employment.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent. This variability is evident across year groups and within subjects such as history, Spanish and, to a lesser degree, English. For example, the carefully planned learning and skilful questioning seen in some Spanish lessons are not present in others. As a consequence, pupil progress is not consistently good.
- Some teachers do not routinely plan learning that is accurately matched to the capabilities of pupils, in particular those who are most able. For instance, pupils in history often complete tasks that do not enable them to apply and improve their analytical skills, which are specific to the subject. As a result, they do not achieve as well as they could.
- Teachers' use of the school's preferred approach to providing feedback on pupils' work varies. Some teachers' comments do not help pupils improve their work. In these classes, pupils do not have a clear understanding of what they need to do next. Where teachers provide clear guidance, for instance in some mathematics and science classes, pupils respond well. As one pupil explained, 'They (the teachers) show me what I need to include or to do so I improve.'
- Teachers in subjects other than English do not routinely plan learning that enables pupils, in particular those who are most able, to practise and develop their literacy skills. In some science classes, pupils are not systematically encouraged to analyse and explain their findings. Consequently, their progress is not as good as it could be.

- Evidence in pupils' books demonstrates that teachers do not have consistently high expectations of how pupils should present their work. In many pupils' books, often those of middle and higher ability, inspectors saw carefully crafted and well-presented work. However, in some classes, teachers do not challenge careless and scruffy work in pupils' books. Where teachers do insist that work is presented to a high standard, pupils respond well, demonstrating their pride in what they do.
- Teachers use good subject knowledge and skilful questioning to extend pupils' thinking and deepen their knowledge. For example, in a key stage 4 geography class, pupils developed a better understanding of population density as a result of their teacher's carefully crafted and persistent questioning.
- Where the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently effective, pupils work eagerly and make good progress. In subjects such as business studies, computer science, drama, English, mathematics and physical education, pupils respond with enthusiasm to teachers' skilful development of learning activities and highly effective questioning. For instance, as a result of the teacher's careful structuring of learning activities, pupils in a key stage 3 English lesson became increasingly confident in their analysis of poetry.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Senior leaders place great emphasis on the care and well-being of pupils at The Gateway Academy. Leaders have developed successful partnerships with a range of external agencies and are justifiably proud that the school was awarded the inclusion quality mark in July 2016.
- The school's coaches work successfully with pupils who need additional support in their learning or social and emotional welfare. Consequently, many of these pupils have improved their attitudes to school and learning. The longer pupils remain at The Gateway Academy, the more mature their attitudes to learning typically become.
- Pupils are proud of their school. Through their participation in the school's 'student leadership group', pupils take an active role in creating an ethos in which pupils recognise and celebrate each other's differences. As a consequence of this work, pupils learn the importance of decision-making and cooperation and are being prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are equipped with an age-appropriate understanding of the potential risks they may face. Pupils explained how talks from external agencies, such as health professionals and police officers, have made them more aware of how to keep themselves safe and free from harm. They also described how, through the school's daily Personal and Academic Development (PAD) sessions, they learn strategies for keeping safe when using social media and other aspects of the internet.
- School leaders ensure that pupils are provided with sufficient independent guidance and support to enable them to make informed choices about their future. Those who are at risk of not being in education, employment or training are provided with

additional support. Leaders are proud that high proportions of pupils continue in education, employment or training when they leave the school.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils typically behave well. Almost all move around the well-maintained school site purposefully and arrive at lessons promptly. Lessons are often characterised by positive relationships between adults and pupils, with very many pupils wanting to learn.
- Lunch and breaktimes are characteristically calm, social events. Pupils commonly mix well together, be it making use of the table-tennis facilities or library, or socialising in the school's courtyard café. Pupils are welcoming to visitors and happily discuss their education and pride in their school.
- On her arrival, the headteacher correctly set clear expectations regarding how pupils should behave. Pupils and staff explained that behaviour has improved significantly and continues to do so. Inspection evidence supports this view. There have been fewer negative incidents recorded and considerably more positive behaviour rewards allocated.
- The behaviour of several pupils who have previously found it hard to make correct behaviour choices is improving and incidents of exclusion are reducing. These pupils are typically taking more responsibility for their actions. One pupil proudly explained how adults in the school had helped him to make better behaviour choices and he was 'now being given the opportunities to show what I am made of'.
- A small number of pupils, typically in the younger years, are taking longer to adapt to the higher expectations and do not behave as well as they should. This causes frustration in other pupils and some parents. Teachers and leaders are relentless in their efforts to improve these pupils' behaviour and any incidents that occur are well managed.
- Leaders carefully track pupils' attendance, including that of those attending alternative provision. Attendance has improved over the past two years and remains in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is below that found nationally.
- Leaders work tirelessly to reduce the absence of pupils who have a history of poor attendance. For example, the school's 'attendance ambassadors' work closely with parents and pupils, often visiting them at home. While this is proving successful with many pupils, leaders acknowledge that they need to accelerate their work to ensure that a number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and also a small group of older, disadvantaged boys, attend more frequently.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Many pupils arrive at The Gateway Academy with previous attainment that is below that of their peers nationally and, in some cases, significantly so. These pupils need to make accelerated progress to catch up. In 2016, due to the variable quality of teaching, learning and assessment, pupils did not make this rapid progress and

achievement was lower than it should have been across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.

- As a consequence of leaders' effective action to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, pupils' progress is improving. Year 11 pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are attaining higher standards and making better progress from their individual starting points than has been the case in the past.
- Pupils' achievement in English in 2016 was lower than it should have been. Inspection evidence demonstrates that pupils currently in school, especially those in key stage 4, are making better progress. This is due to the improved teaching and support that pupils receive in this subject.
- In 2016, pupils' achievement in mathematics was in line with that of other pupils nationally. Current pupils' progress is good. This is particularly the case in key stage 4. Pupils are responding well to the improving quality of teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including those who were most able, did not achieve well enough in 2016. These pupils are now making stronger progress in English, mathematics and science. This is because of the better teaching and more precise support that they receive. However, inspection evidence demonstrates that these pupils' progress is not yet consistently good in all subjects.
- Too few of the most able pupils achieved as well as they should have done in 2016. Their progress remains variable. Inspection evidence, including the work seen in pupils' books, demonstrates that, while higher proportions of these pupils are currently making good progress in subjects such as mathematics and business studies, this is not consistently the case elsewhere. Leaders have correctly made increasing the progress of most-able pupils a priority for the school.
- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving, but remains variable, as it is for those pupils who have an education, health and care plan.
- Pupils are making improved progress in many subjects across the curriculum. For example, achievement in business studies, computer science, physical education, art and drama is good or improving. However, work in pupils' books and the school's assessment information demonstrate that outcomes in other subjects, such as Spanish, history and geography, are weaker and require improvement.

## School details

Unique reference number	133114
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	10033543

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	1,054
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hilary Hodgson
Headteacher	Grainne McLaughlin
Telephone number	01375 489 000
Website	<a href="http://www.theglc-gatewayacademy.org.uk">www.theglc-gatewayacademy.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@theglc.org.uk">info@theglc.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	May 2011

## Information about this school

- The school is part of The Gateway Learning Community Trust.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school, based on key stage 4 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support for special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is slightly higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below the national average.

- The school makes use of The Thurrock Turnaround Centre to provide alternative education for a very small number of pupils.
- 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.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for attainment and standards.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 49 lessons and three PAD sessions. Several of these visits were carried out with members of the school’s senior leadership team or with the chief executive officer of The Gateway Learning Community Trust.
- Inspectors looked through pupils’ work in a range of different subjects.
- Inspectors observed pupils’ behaviour in classrooms, at the start and end of the school day, at lunchtime and when pupils were moving around the school site between lessons.
- Inspectors held discussions with four groups of pupils and with many other pupils informally around school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, three groups of middle leaders, a group of six teachers, a group of six teaching assistants, two members of the trust, the chair of the governing body, a consultant working with the school and two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation including information relating to pupils’ attainment and progress and leaders’ evaluation of the school’s performance and its areas for development.
- Inspectors considered the views of 80 parents who completed Ofsted’s online survey, Parent View, as well as the views of the 75 who responded on the free-text service. Inspectors also took account of the school’s own surveys of parental opinion.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 75 members of staff who completed the Ofsted online survey, as well as those of individual members of staff who spoke with the inspection team.
- Inspectors looked at behaviour records and reviewed safeguarding documentation and how this related to daily practice, as well as speaking with staff and children.

## Inspection team

John Lucas, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Anne Pepper	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Wilson	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Ladner	Ofsted Inspector

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