

Inspection of Bexhill High Academy

Gunters Lane, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex TN39 4BY

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils study a broad and ambitious curriculum. Leaders have worked hard to design a curriculum that is engaging and suitably challenging for all pupils. Pupils also have opportunities to develop a richer interest in and understanding of curriculum subjects, for example through the scholarship programme. However, some pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are not yet well supported to access the curriculum and achieve well. Where the teaching of the curriculum is stronger and behaviour is well managed, pupils are more engaged and learn more as a result.

Beyond lessons, pupils benefit from assemblies and tutor time activities that focus on their wider development. They discuss important age-appropriate themes that link closely to the school values. Pupils also benefit from the range of extra-curricular activities and clubs on offer.

Many pupils want to do well and enjoy attending school. However, those who do not enjoy school express concerns about behaviour and bullying. Although most pupils feel that bullying is dealt with effectively, they are less confident that poor behaviour is managed fairly across the school. This means that there are a small group of pupils who do not always feel safe in school. Furthermore, some pupils are concerned that derogatory language has become normalised within their peer groups. Leaders are taking action but there are yet to be sustained demonstrable impacts.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Staff are ambitious for their pupils and are clear that there is no ceiling on what they can achieve. Curriculum leaders have thought carefully about what knowledge is taught and when it is best to teach it within each subject. However, many of the planned curriculums are in the early stages of implementation. This means that the learning activities in some lessons are not yet consistently supporting all pupils to know more and remember more. In some subjects, this is because the activities set for pupils are not well matched to pupils' starting points. Therefore, some pupils who have gaps in their knowledge do not have enough time to practise and receive the feedback they need to improve before they are moved on to learn more complex content. In addition, pupils are not always provided with feedback that is helping them to improve. Sometimes the feedback pupils receive is unnecessarily complex or too generic.

Although leaders have accurately identified pupils with SEND who might require additional support, the information about what works well for these pupils is sometimes not precise enough to match their needs. This means that in many cases pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they could. Additionally, leaders have identified pupils who are struggling to read accurately and fluently. However, the actions leaders are taking to support these pupils are in the early stages.

Pupils are interested in and enjoy their personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons. Within these lessons, pupils benefit from clearly planned opportunities to learn about how to prepare for their future lives. This includes careers-related guidance that is purposeful and linked closely to the community and local businesses.

Many parents and pupils share concerns about behaviour. Leaders have had some success in supporting pupils whose behaviour is particularly challenging, for example through the use of their own on-site alternative provision. However, leaders know that there is more work to be done to cultivate a positive and respectful culture for all. Attendance is showing signs of improvement but remains low for specific groups of pupils, including those with SEND.

Trustees have a range of experience and expertise. They support and challenge leaders appropriately through regular external reviews. More recently there has been further direct engagement with staff to support the improvement of the school. Where staff share workload concerns, leaders are trying to provide carefully considered support through, for example, a newly implemented feedback approach. There is more to be done by leaders at all levels to promote positive channels of communication between all stakeholders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Trustees regularly monitor safeguarding practice. They ensure that appropriate checks are in place for adults who work with pupils.

Staff have received appropriate training. They understand their role in how to keep pupils safe in school. They are also acutely aware of the risks that pupils might face within the community. They respond quickly and appropriately if a pupil is at risk. Written records are made in a timely way and referrals are promptly made when appropriate.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a range of ways, including PSHE lessons, assemblies and visits from the school police officer. Pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of how to look after their physical, mental and social well-being.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils share concerns about poor behaviour interrupting their learning in lessons and pupils behaving antisocially during social times. This means that some pupils do not always feel safe in school. Leaders must ensure that their expectations for pupils' behaviour are clearly communicated and that all staff are supported to implement a fair and consistent behaviour policy across the school.

- Some pupils accept derogatory language from their peers. This means that not all incidents of discrimination are reported. Leaders must evaluate the current approaches they use to communicate important messages to pupils that derogatory language is not tolerated.
- Leaders are taking action to improve attendance. However, too many pupils do not attend school often enough. Pupils are missing the education to which they are entitled. Leaders must continue with their work to raise attendance by reviewing their approaches so that pupils are in school more consistently and benefiting from full-time education.
- The implementation of some curriculum plans is in the early stages. Therefore, there is variability within and between subjects. This means that some teaching approaches are not yet well matched to build on pupils' prior knowledge. Leaders must ensure that all pupils are well supported to access the intended curriculum.
- Pupils with SEND are not yet provided with the clear and detailed support they require. This means that not all pupils with SEND are accessing the curriculum and achieving well. Leaders must ensure that staff have the support they need to meet the needs of all pupils. Leaders must also ensure that they have robust systems in place to monitor the precise impacts of their actions and make modifications as required.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	138895
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10240103
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	1,523
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tom Attwood
Principal	Catherine Davies (Executive Principal)
Website	www.bexhillacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	3 and 4 May 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is sponsored by The Attwood Academy Trust.
- There have been changes to the senior leadership of the school since the last inspection in May 2017, including the executive principal.
- The school currently uses four alternative provisions. The school has an on-site alternative provision called ACE.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND called the LINK. All pupils have education, health and care plans for autism spectrum disorder.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, history, languages, design and technology and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with the subject leader, observed pupils at work, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive principal, the vice principals and other leaders. The lead inspector also held meetings with members of the trust board and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection team reviewed a range of documentation and relevant school policies, including leaders' own evaluation of the effectiveness of the school and their plans for further improvement.
- Inspectors talked to a wide range of pupils and observed their behaviour in lessons and during social times.
- Inspectors reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by looking at relevant documentation, staff recruitment checks and training records. The inspectors also talked to a range of staff and pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils to gather their views. They considered 261 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 241 free-text comments. Inspectors also met with a small group of parents and considered all written communication from parents that was provided during the inspection. Inspectors also took account of 98 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Hanna Miller, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Ed Mather	His Majesty's Inspector
Scott Norman	Ofsted Inspector
Dave Euridge	Ofsted Inspector
Mary McKeeman	Ofsted Inspector

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