

Bristnall Hall Academy

Bristnall Hall Lane, Oldbury, West Midlands B68 9PA

Inspection dates

1–2 November 2016

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
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal's inspired leadership has secured improvements since the last inspection.
- Improvements in teaching have resulted in an increase in overall attainment at GCSE in 2015 and 2016.
- In 2015 and 2016, the progress of disadvantaged pupils at GCSE was in line with that of other pupils nationally.
- The progress of pupils currently at school is at least good from all starting points. This is because teaching, learning and assessment across the school are good.
- Knowledgeable and enthusiastic teachers support the majority of pupils in making good progress from starting points that are low overall.
- Leaders have not yet ensured that teaching allows pupils, including the most able, to make excellent progress.
- Pupils are good ambassadors for the school. They behave well in classrooms and socially.
- Overall attendance is improving and close to the national average. A small minority of disadvantaged pupils do not attend regularly.
- Governors are highly effective. They are knowledgeable about the school and its community.
- The work of the Academy Transformation Trust in supporting the school is good.
- Provision in the small sixth form is effective and meets the needs of students.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is effective. Bristnall Hall Academy is inclusive and its attention to personal development and welfare supports pupils in their learning and progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the good teaching that already exists in the school is built upon so that more pupils, including the most able, experience challenging work that equips them with the skills, knowledge and understanding needed to make excellent progress.
- Continue to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils to that of all pupils nationally by making sure that:
 - leaders build further on their work to engage the families of disadvantaged pupils and help parents understand the importance of regular attendance and the resulting impact on their children's future life chances.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal, senior leadership team and governors are committed to making the school the best it can be. Leaders and governors want all pupils to enjoy school and to achieve highly, regardless of ability or background. Leaders' work has led to demonstrable improvements in teaching, attendance, behaviour and outcomes.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have taken robust and successful actions to improve the school's overall performance and its financial position. Staff restructuring has been an effective aspect of this process. The profile of teaching has improved, including the use of lead practitioners who are highly skilled specialists, improving standards of teaching and outcomes through training and the sharing of good practice. New posts have been successful in driving improvements. New positions include achievement coordinators who have contributed to supporting the overall improvements in attendance and behaviour through their work with pupils and their families.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is good. Inspectors confirmed, through joint observations and discussions, that leaders' analysis of the quality of teaching is accurate. The school's effective programme for continuing professional development has sharpened the quality of teaching and has led to improved outcomes. Newly qualified teachers and middle leaders told inspectors that they appreciate the training opportunities available. Training has included a specific focus on areas such as assessment and questioning, and nationally accredited courses for leadership.
- Leaders are aware of the need to develop systems further to ensure that teaching allows pupils, particularly the most able, to develop excellent knowledge, skills and understanding.
- The management of staff performance is robust. The link between performance management and salary progression is strong. Teachers have sharp, measurable targets linked to the school's priorities. The school supports staff in achieving these targets, which has led to improved outcomes for pupils. Leaders are also prepared to take difficult decisions where teachers are not successful in meeting targets.
- Leaders are determined to reduce any difference between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and others nationally, including the most-able disadvantaged pupils. Leaders and governors ensure that funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively and that these pupils make good progress.
- Improvements in the progress and behaviour of disadvantaged pupils are due to better identification of needs, monitoring and teachers being held accountable for performance.
- Leaders and governors are aware that the attendance levels of a small minority of disadvantaged pupils must improve even further. Though some strategies to improve attendance of this group have been successful, further work is required.
- Funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used effectively. These pupils achieved in line with others nationally in 2015 and 2016.

- Leaders accurately identify the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Provision successfully meets a range of different needs and pupils feel supported and involved in the life of the school. Pupils are making good progress as seen by evidence in school data, books and in lessons.
- Those pupils supported by the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium funding make good progress from often very low starting points. This progress was confirmed by inspectors through an analysis of information provided by the school and a scrutiny of the work of current pupils.
- The school's curriculum is appropriate and prepares pupils for national examinations and life beyond school. The curriculum is varied, raises aspirations and is flexible to meet individual needs, including for those who require greater support. Leaders are ambitious for high standards through the curriculum and encourage pupils to study courses leading to the English Baccalaureate qualification. This includes over half of the pupils in Years 10 and 11 studying a modern foreign language. This has been the case for several years. Attainment at GCSE in the English Baccalaureate is strong.
- Pupils have the opportunity to be involved in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. These include areas such as sport, music, dance, computing and drama. The school also provides opportunities for pupils to undertake extra work in various subjects after school.
- The school's curriculum programme to develop pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is rich and strong and supports their personal development. Inspectors saw evidence of the school celebrating lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual diversity. Pupils involved in a visit to a university told inspectors how it inspired them. The principal, through leading an assembly, has encouraged pupils to support the 2016 British Legion Poppy Appeal. Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders' actions have ensured that most teaching is now consistently good. Occasionally, however, there is insufficient opportunity for pupils, including the most able, to be challenged and to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills that will lead to more gaining outstanding progress at GCSE and A level from their different starting points.
- The overwhelming number of parents, pupils and staff who responded to an online survey during the inspection, as well as those who spoke to inspectors, felt that the school has improved over the last two years.

Governance of the school

- The school benefits from strong governance. Individuals bring a wide range of skills, expertise and extensive knowledge of the local community. Governors are aware of their core purposes. They have helped develop the vision of the school, and this is resulting in improved outcomes.
- Governors could exemplify how they both hold the principal to account, and offer support. They referenced this in terms of setting targets for improved outcomes, financial probity and their work overseeing leaders' restructuring of staffing.
- There is a clear focus upon governors' own self-development with support from the Academy Transformation Trust. This includes an annual audit of skills, and conferences in which governors can share best practice with those from other schools.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. This is as a result of good leadership and strong systems. The school adheres to all training requirements including the 'Prevent' duty, which aims to keep pupils safe from the risks of radicalisation and extremism.
- All required checks are carried out when new staff are recruited.
- The designated lead for child protection is knowledgeable and works well with outside agencies.
- All incidents or disclosures are followed up robustly.
- Pupils are taught to keep safe. This includes within specific lessons dealing with personal, social, health and economic education.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Consistently good teaching, supported by strong leadership and effective pastoral care, has led to improving outcomes for pupils, many of whom who have very low levels of prior attainment on entry to the school. Past underperformance is being tackled effectively and progress is now good.
- A relaxed and cooperative learning environment creates strong relationships between teachers and pupils, and between pupils themselves. The positive attitudes seen in the majority of lessons support learning effectively.
- Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subjects. They plan lessons building upon what pupils have done before. Tasks set are usually appropriate to pupils' starting points and their aspirational targets.
- Pupils receive a variety of different approaches to ensure progression in their learning. In mathematics, inspectors saw pupils encouraged to move on at their own pace when they felt they were able. The teacher and teaching assistant monitored this for effectiveness. In some other subjects, a general topic is studied and different levels of support offered. The overwhelming majority of pupils make good progress because of supportive teaching.
- The school's assessment systems are well embedded. Systems improve pupils' learning by allowing them to build upon identified strengths and address comparative weaknesses. In mathematics in key stage 3, pupils could show inspectors how they used teacher feedback to improve their understanding and application of prime numbers.
- Assessment information in technology allows teachers to be precise about pupils' abilities and their current levels of understanding. This enables teachers to plan tasks around the skills pupils need to improve in order to reach their targets.
- The school acted upon advice in the previous inspection report to focus more upon literacy skill development. Inspectors saw this in a number of subjects, including physical education where pupils used technical language, and in English where pupils were given opportunities to develop a rich range of vocabulary. Pupils' good progress in English and humanities at both key stages 3 and 4 is supported by teaching which structures the development of their writing skills. They are encouraged to use a range of short and longer sentences, key vocabulary and a suitable variety of correct punctuation. Pupils' reading and writing skills are enhanced further by longer homework tasks focused upon research activities.

- Additional adults in lessons contribute positively to improving the progress of individuals and groups. Teaching assistants know pupils and the subject matter well. As a result, they are able to progress learning in a way that complements the work of the teacher.
- Pupils respond well when there is particular expectation for them to show a high standard of presentation in exercise books and folders. There is a sense of pride shown in much of the work seen by inspectors.
- In the majority of books reviewed, work was marked effectively in line with the school's policy. In a small number of books, basic errors are not corrected, even when they have been made on more than one occasion. These included a small number of pupils not capitalising proper nouns.
- The most able pupils are usually challenged appropriately. At times, more tightly structured teaching inhibits pupils' capacity to develop their own ideas, or to expand their thinking. On a small number of occasions, in English for example, this prevents them writing with the flair, creativity, reasoning and imagination required to gain the highest grades at GCSE.
- Pupils feel that homework supports their learning and inspectors saw evidence of homework being set. Some most-able pupils feel that there are inconsistencies across subjects in terms of how much homework is set.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Every individual is valued in this school. It recognises that everyone is different but equal. This creates an environment in which pupils feel safe and comfortable. It gives them confidence, for example, to be open about their sexual orientation.
- In the overwhelming majority of lessons, pupils were courteous, polite, well-mannered and considerate. These positive attributes support their learning. In the small minority of lessons in which learning was less effective, pupils were more compliant than engaged in the work they were doing. This was not the case where the work was more interesting and challenging.
- A clear programme is in operation to support up to five pupils per year group who form the school's Focus Provision for Autism. This programme includes support for teachers on how to meet pupils' learning needs and the provision of a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. These effective actions allow this group of pupils to be fully integrated into the life of the school.
- Pupils who spoke to inspectors, both formally and informally, have a good understanding of various types of bullying, including homophobic, sexual and cyber bullying. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations inside and outside school. Pupils feel that displays highlighting the signs of, and dangers relating to, child sexual exploitation are effective. Pupils recognise the dangers associated with the internet because of the good information given to them by teachers.

- Pupils say that bullying is rare. They feel that if bullying does occur, teachers handle it effectively. A small minority of the pupils who responded to an online survey during the inspection felt that teachers were less effective at handling issues of bullying than did those who met inspectors.
- All teaching and support staff who completed the online survey feel that the school keeps its pupils safe. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the survey were positive about the school and how it supports pupils, including keeping them free from harm. Inspectors' observations in school and analysis of records confirmed that it is a safe environment for young people.
- Pupils are well prepared to progress to the next stage of education, training or employment through concerted activities in the school and its focus upon improving outcomes. The school's motto – 'nurture, aspire, achieve' – is linked to employability skills and attributes. Evidence of the school's focus is seen in wall displays linking mathematics to the world of work. Stand-down days have focused upon enterprise challenges. Sixth-form students are encouraged to take up internships.
- An independent careers adviser is available in school three days a week. Formal meetings and informal drop-in sessions are encouraged. Over the past two years, only two pupils have not moved on to education, employment and training. All disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities leave the school and move on to appropriate courses, training or employment.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills and these help prepare them well for the future. Elections take place for the junior leadership team and for choosing the head boy and head girl. Sixth-form students are supported by the school to attend Auschwitz and report back as part of Holocaust Memorial Day. This allows pupils to understand historical errors of the past and the ongoing effect on so many people.
- Pupils told inspectors about peer and subject mentoring that takes place in Years 8 and 9. Some pupils told inspectors how proud they are to represent the school and how much they have enjoyed recent sporting success, including in football.
- Pupils are taught how to help others through, for example, training for the whole-school community in 'Restart a Heart'. Pupils are also encouraged to show empathy. This was demonstrated in an assembly about Remembrance Day, where pupils listened attentively to the principal's key message of thinking of others, including the families of those wounded or killed while serving in the armed forces.
- The school has been nominated for the Sandwell 'Wellbeing Charter Mark' due to its promotion of healthy lifestyles.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school in lesson time, between lessons and during social time is good. They wear their uniform well and are respectful of the school environment. Pupils are friendly to visitors and speak positively about their school.
- The Learning Support Unit caters for pupils who find it more difficult to adapt to school requirements. Inspectors found the atmosphere within the unit to be purposeful. After a short time within the unit, pupils are well prepared to rejoin the main school.

- Overall attendance continues to improve and the number of pupils who are regularly absent is falling. The school is close to the national average for these measures. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is slightly below that of all pupils nationally but is improving. The school is taking further action to engage the families of disadvantaged pupils so that attendance continues to rise.
- Following a spike in exclusions in 2014/15 when the new principal arrived, behaviour in the school is much improved. Exclusions, including those of pupils excluded more than once, fell markedly in 2015/16. In the current academic year, exclusions are very low and well below the national average. These improvements are particularly positive for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, who have been disproportionately excluded previously.
- A small number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 access full-time courses outside the school. Their progress and attendance are well monitored and communication between the different organisations is very effective. Work and information seen by inspectors confirmed that pupils are making appropriate progress from their different starting points and that their attendance and behaviour are good.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Achievement across the school has improved considerably since the last inspection. This is a result of leaders' relentless focus upon improving teaching. The life chances of young people are enhanced as a result of pupils developing better skills and gaining recognised qualifications.
- Pupils who sat GCSEs in 2015 and 2016 entered the school with attainment that was well below average. By the end of Year 11, pupils achieved standards close to those achieved by all pupils nationally. From their very low starting points, this represents good progress. Current data and evidence seen on inspection support a continuation of this rising trend.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils has improved since the last inspection. In 2015 and 2016, disadvantaged pupils made progress at least in line with other pupils nationally with similar starting points. The progress of the majority of disadvantaged pupils in key stages 3 and 4 is good. A small number, however, do not achieve as well as they could because they do not attend regularly.
- The numbers of pupils gaining at least a C grade in English and mathematics improved to 56% in 2016. In addition to this representing good progress for pupils, given their very low starting points, it also indicates leaders' successful focus upon ensuring that pupils attain well in these essential subjects.
- A particular strength of the school in 2016 was the number of pupils gaining grade C or better in all EBacc qualifications. The figure of 32% was well in excess of that nationally. This figure included the overwhelming majority of the most able disadvantaged pupils in the school.
- The school takes action where there is an inconsistency in outcomes. This was effective in 2016, with much-improved results in ICT following two years of low performance. Current work indicates pupils making good progress in this subject, but greater challenge is required at key stage 3. A recent relative decline in English has led to

changes, and current standards seen by inspectors support the school's view that improvement is evident.

- In 2016, the progress of less-able pupils was lower than others in the school with higher starting points. Leaders presented analysis for the reasons for this decline, related to exceptionally low attainment on entry. The work seen for current learners in classes and in books supports the view that less-able pupils are now making good progress.
- The most able pupils now make good progress and the school is increasingly focusing upon providing opportunities for them to gain excellent knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Leaders accurately evaluate the quality of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Their progress was in line with all pupils nationally in 2016, with the exception of English. Current pupils' progress is good from different starting points because of improved teaching across all subjects.
- The school is effective in improving literacy and numeracy standards for current pupils eligible for funding under the Year 7 catch-up programme. Analysis of the work of current Year 7 pupils, and Year 8 pupils who had completed the programme, shows secure improvements in learning. These were even greater in literacy than in numeracy as the school feels low reading ages are one of the main barriers to progress and has devoted more resources to this.
- An increasingly effective literacy culture is evident. Inspectors saw tutor times used well to support pupils across the school reading for pleasure.
- Inspectors checked the school's current data and held meetings with leaders and representatives of the Academy Transformation Trust to discuss the rigour of progress monitoring. The school is increasingly accurate in its predictions of outcomes at examination level.
- The school's performance data for pupils currently in Years 8 to 11 indicates that pupils in all year groups are making good progress from different starting points. Observations by inspectors in lessons, discussions with pupils and scrutiny of their books confirmed this analysis.
- More work is required to improve teaching further and allow pupils, particularly the most able, to develop the skills required to make excellent progress.
- The targets set for pupils reflect the high aspirations of the school. Pupils write these targets on the front of their books and when asked by inspectors they could explain what they meant. Targets for pupils are based upon them attaining highly and making greater progress than pupils nationally.
- As a result of improved outcomes in examinations, pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning or employment. This includes pupils attending alternative provision. There is a focus upon all pupils being given equal opportunities to succeed.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The 16 to 19 study programme offered to students in this very small sixth form is effective and meets their needs. Leadership of the sixth form is good.
- Standards in the sixth form in 2015 and 2016 were broadly average. The standards of work for current students on academic and vocational courses show good progress from their starting points.
- The number of students who stay to the end of their courses in the sixth form has improved between 2015 and 2016. All those who have left the sixth form before the end of their course, or on completion, have progressed on to appropriate courses, employment or training.
- Teaching is effective and teachers are fully aware of the individual needs of students and plan lessons appropriately. Classes are very small but relationships between teachers and students are positive, as they are in the main school, and this reinforces learning. On occasion, lessons lack the stretch and challenge required for students to attain the highest grades.
- Attendance in the sixth form is high, currently at 98%, and behaviour is good.
- Students told inspectors they feel supported and safe in school. They can explain how they learn about areas such as diversity and e-safety within weekly personal, social, health and economic lessons. Students can also reference examples of learning the importance of employability skills within these sessions, through specific involvement with careers advisers and within the various subjects they studied.
- A very small number of students needed to retake English and/or mathematics at GCSE in both 2015 and 2016. They were all successful in attaining a C grade or above.
- The sixth form consists of 19 students in Year 13 as the governing body made a decision not to offer courses in Year 12 from September 2016.

School details

Unique reference number	139043
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	10020040

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 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	957
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	19
Appropriate authority	The academy trust
Chair	Stephen Tilsley
Principal	Vince Green
Telephone number	01215 525425
Website	www.bristnallhallacademy.attrust.org.uk
Email address	info@bha.attrust.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 November 2014

Information about this school

- Bristnall Academy is an average-sized secondary school with a very small sixth form.
- The school is part of the Academy Transformation Trust.
- The current principal joined the school in September 2014.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above the national average.

- In 2015, the school met the government's floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school partway through the year is higher than average.
- The school places pupils who may require additional support at the Oak Tree Centre or on alternative provision at Sandwell Community School, Impact Education, Whiteheath and Sandwell Valley School.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with DfE guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of lessons, several of which were observed with senior staff. In addition, inspectors also visited tutor time, an assembly and observed pupils' conduct at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons. They scrutinised some pupils' books across subjects in more depth. They also looked at information on pupils' current progress and attainment. An inspector visited one of the organisations the school uses to provide alternative learning opportunities for a small number of pupils at key stage 4.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, subject and pastoral leaders and class teachers. The lead inspector held meetings with newly qualified teachers, governors and representatives of the Academy Transformation Trust.
- Inspectors met with four groups of pupils formally and spoke with many more pupils informally. They took account of the 21 responses to the online pupil survey.
- The inspection team analysed a wide range of documentation including: the school's website, policies, the school development plan and evaluations of the school's progress, governors' minutes, safeguarding procedures and records showing how the school supports vulnerable pupils.
- The inspection team took account of 10 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and six free-text responses received from parents. Inspectors also considered the 35 responses to the staff online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Nigel Griffiths, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Graham Tyrer	Ofsted Inspector
Deborah Smith	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Feldman	Ofsted Inspector

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