

Inspection of Belfairs Academy

Highlands Boulevard, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 3TG

Inspection dates: 14 May and 4 and 5 June 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

The principal of this school is Beverley Williams. This school is part of the Legra Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Beverley Williams, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Kathy Herlock.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils like coming to school. They are especially encouraged to take advantage of the breakfast club that is organised by sixth-form students. Those that attend enjoy the welcoming start to the day it provides. Pupils feel safe in school because they know that there are staff that they can talk to if they have any worries. These include, for example, year leaders and the well-being team.

The school has designed a curriculum that is broad, responds to pupils' interests and aims to prepare them for the next stage of education or training. Students in the sixth form have a broad range of academic and vocational courses to choose from. However, weaknesses in how the curriculum is taught mean that pupils do not achieve as well as they should in Years 7 to 11. The school has not taken quick enough action to identify and fix the causes of this.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school, including during break and lunchtimes. The school is a busy and vibrant space, where pupils get on well with one another.

To enhance their learning, pupils have a wide range of extra-curricular activities and educational visits to choose from. Leaders listen actively to pupils' views. For example, they have implemented strategies to support younger pupils feel settled in school, including toilets for the sole use of Years 7 and 8 and a summer school. Bullying is rare and, any incidents that do occur, are dealt with swiftly.

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

The school's curriculum enables pupils to explore areas of interest. The subject content that pupils learn over the course of Years 7 to 9 is at least as ambitious as the national curriculum.

Subject leadership has thought carefully about what pupils should know. The teaching of this knowledge is organised into a logical sequence. For example, in engineering, sixth-form students use their learning about computer-aided design from their design and technology (DT) GCSE to help them design and refine products.

In the sixth form, and in some subjects such as English and DT, teaching typically uses activities that enable pupils to recall prior knowledge and then build on it step by step. This prepares pupils well to attempt more complex tasks. In these subjects, teaching gives clear instructions, models examples well and corrects misconceptions in a timely manner.

These teaching techniques are not in place across all subjects in Years 7 to 11. Some lessons are not focused on the key knowledge that pupils are expected to learn. This includes knowledge that the school is prioritising due to gaps in pupils' prior learning. Some teaching does not explain subject content in a way that helps

pupils to grasp ideas correctly. As a result, pupils are not able to build their understanding of more complex ideas over time.

The school has not thought enough about how to check what pupils know and understand as they progress through the curriculum. As a result, teaching does not identify the gaps or misconceptions in pupils' understanding as they arise. Pupils then repeat mistakes rather than correcting them. The lack of purposeful assessment also means that some teaching provides pupils with too little practise in what they are learning. When this happens, pupils struggle to commit the knowledge or skill to their long-term memory. This all means that pupils do not achieve well, including in public examinations.

The trust and the academy governing body have secure knowledge of the school's work on behaviour and enriching pupils' experience of school. They ensure that the school meets its statutory responsibilities about safeguarding and equalities. However, those responsible for governance have not challenged the school about the root cause of pupils' low outcomes quickly enough. As a result, leadership has not taken timely and credible steps to assure itself that pupils' outcomes in Years 7 to 11 are likely to improve.

Leaders identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) quickly. Pupils with SEND receive a range of personalised extra support, including when moving from primary to secondary school. For example, they are encouraged to join the summer school ahead of the start of Year 7. Pupils with SEND access the full curriculum. Teachers adapt resources well to meet the needs of individual pupils. Pupils at an early stage of reading receive the support that they need to become accurate and fluent readers quickly.

Pupils have a positive attitude to school, and attendance is good and improving. Pupils are focused on their learning, particularly when teaching breaks knowledge down into small chunks. Pupils are also keen to gain reward points and are proud to receive 'shining star' awards. Leaders analyse attendance and punctuality and they are tenacious and well focused in their work to get pupils into school.

A strength of the school is its enrichment programme and the way it aims to develop pupils' character. Leaders work with rigour to provide pupils with broad experiences beyond their academic and vocational studies. This includes a wide offer for clubs and educational visits. Leaders track pupils' participation in these activities, with attendance contributing to reward points.

Pupils develop leadership skills through a range of ambassador roles, for example, for the environment or for the local community. 'College' captains meet with leaders to contribute ideas for ways in which the school can be improved, and each college chooses a charity to fundraise for each year. A suitable programme of careers education is offered from Year 7 to Year 13. For instance, pupils learn about different professions through the educational visits and 'getting into' workshops.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teaching choices, mainly in Years 7 to 11, are not focused on making sure that pupils understand and remember long term the knowledge that has been identified in the school's curriculum. Subject content identified as a priority due to gaps in pupils' prior learning is not given sufficient emphasis. In some lessons, subject matter is not presented in a clear and accurate manner. All of this is holding pupils back from achieving well. The school should build sufficient expertise in teaching the curriculum so that pupils develop knowledge effectively and achieve highly, including in public examinations at the end of Year 11. This includes ensuring that teaching is focused on the key knowledge that the school wants pupils to know and remember using the most effective teaching methods to achieve this.
- Teaching, primarily in Years 7 to 11, is not alert and responsive to mistakes that pupils make or the misconceptions that they have. As a result, pupils do not develop and deepen their understanding effectively, as gaps in their knowledge are not rectified. The school should ensure that teaching uses effective approaches to check pupils' understanding and address any gaps in knowledge, including revisiting or practising subject content when needed to secure pupils' understanding.
- The school's evaluation of the quality of education has not accurately identified the key areas that need to improve to secure better outcomes for pupils. As a result, pupils reach the end of Year 11 with gaps in their knowledge and they do not achieve as well as they should. The school, including those responsible for governance, must make sure that its quality assurance systems focus on accurate and prompt identification of what needs to be better. The school should use this information effectively to prioritise and evaluate actions, with emphasis given to improving teachers' pedagogy and pedagogical content knowledge and raising pupils' achievement. Those responsible for governance should provide the school with effective challenge on all aspects of the school's work.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	138174
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	10323717
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1447
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	168
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kathy Herlock
CEO	Beverley Williams
Principal	Beverley Williams
Website	www.belfairsacademy.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	17 and 18 May 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Legra Academy Trust; it has been part of the trust since 2015.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspection started on 14 May 2024. The inspection was paused, in line with [Ofsted inspections and visits: Deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence](#) policy. Due to the delay in the inspection recommencing, it was deemed incomplete. Therefore, a further team of inspectors returned to the school to gather additional evidence on 4 and 5 June.
- Inspectors met with the principal and other senior leaders, including both vice principals. Inspectors met with the chair of the trust, the chair of the academy governing body and one of its members.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, DT, mathematics, modern foreign languages, religious education and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered other aspects of the curriculum, including in the sixth form.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils in all key stages. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes was observed.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of staff about the school's work, including about safeguarding and behaviour. Inspectors also looked at staff, parent and pupil responses to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

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Susan Sutton	Ofsted Inspector
Rowena Simmons	Ofsted Inspector
Victoria Hearn	Ofsted Inspector
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