

Belfairs Academy

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

Unique reference number (URN): 138174

Inspection report: 28 April 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Pupils generally do not miss much of school. Their attendance rates over time are in line with those seen nationally. This is also the case for pupils who are persistently absent. Recently, due to specific factors, there was a dip in the school's healthy attendance rate. Leaders quickly altered their attendance strategy to support pupils who face barriers to their attendance. Their efforts are bearing fruit. Pupils, along with their families, are responding well to the extra support they receive. This includes initiatives such as parents and carers' workshops with external specialists.

The behaviour policy is used consistently by staff and is well understood by pupils. They know clearly what the rules and routines of the academy are. Most pupils follow these well. Where they may forget, they respond well to the gentle reminders of staff. Suspensions and bullying incidents are low. This is because staff are adept at 'nipping in the bud' any issues or displays of unkindness. Lessons are typically calm, where pupils pay close attention to the teacher and to each other. The computerised sensory room where pupils undertake programmes to influence mood and practice mindfulness is highly appreciated by staff and pupils alike. Through such initiatives pupils learn how to self manage their emotions and responses.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

The school has inclusion at its heart. Academy staff, together with expertise from the local authority and health services, identify needs effectively and plan support and intervention to meet academic and social needs. This includes checking, on entry, pupils' reading ability. Pupils with multiple needs receive specialist advice so the academy can provide for, and understand, the impact of anxiety, mental health or social needs that form barriers to pupils' engagement with education. The academy has a well-qualified team which gains a great deal of benefit from local authority and NHS support.

The multidisciplinary team looks closely at vulnerabilities and risks for all pupils. They make sure that pupils, such as those known to social care, get the support they need. Local authority virtual schools are highly complimentary about the school's work to support children in care. There is a range of support, including counselling, available to pupils.

Leaders implement an evidence-based strategy in their use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, that is carefully planned and monitored across all aspects of the curriculum. This includes enrichment opportunities that impact on pupils' success. The impact of the strategy is seen with consistently higher attainment and progress through the curriculum. It is narrowing the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. Alternative provision is commissioned in pupils' best interests.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is comprehensive. Pupils learn the fundamentals about relationships and sex education. The order in which

pupils learn key content is sensible. It is age-appropriate and builds successfully pupils' knowledge and understanding over time. For example, pupils understand the topic of consent. The younger years see clearly the links with their primary learning on this aspect. Pupils are confident about how to be safe online. This includes with the use of social media. Their understanding of fundamental British values and other faiths and cultures is also enhanced through the tutor programme. Overall, pupils value their PSHE input. They appreciate learning about current affairs and the issues they may face in society.

Leaders are continually evolving careers education, information, advice and guidance. They have ensured that they continue to expand their offer. Taking note of, for instance, the requirement to make sure that pupils are in receipt of 6 meaningful encounters with employers and the changes to careers education guidance. They are making steady progress with this. Pupils are in receipt of independent, one-to-one guidance. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have appropriate input for the preparation for adulthood.

Leaders have put in place a wide-ranging enrichment offer. They look closely at how often pupils take part. They ensure that pupils have reward for doing so. Pupils have a variety of opportunities to contribute to the school, whether this is through leadership roles or through charitable endeavours. Vulnerable pupils and those who are disadvantaged receive well-targeted support so they can fully access opportunities, for example undertaking cultural trips abroad. The school's pastoral support is making a positive difference to pupils. They feel listened to and understood.

Needs attention ●

Achievement

Needs attention ●

Students in the sixth form who take A-level courses are not achieving as well as they should. Over time, results have been below those seen nationally. This is not the case for students who follow applied courses, where they typically perform higher than students nationally. In lower years, some pupils do not gain the skills they need to learn to read and write, and use number quickly enough.

Over time, pupils achieve in line with the picture nationally in their examinations in Year 11. This includes disadvantaged pupils. Leaders successfully remove barriers to achievement for this group of pupils. Pupils' current work indicates that they are learning the intended curriculum. In the majority of subjects, they recall effectively the knowledge they need to achieve well and attain their next steps in education, employment or training. Pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans receive appropriate support so they are successful in attaining their targets.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention ●

The effectiveness of the support for pupils' reading, writing and numeracy across the curriculum is variable. While the school provides suitable interventions for Year 7 pupils, this is not consistent for older pupils. Some staff have not utilised fully the training they receive

to ensure that pupils get the support they need with the basics in their lessons. Pupils do not spend the Department for Education's recommended 32.5 hours per week in school where some of this learning could take place. Where support helps pupils to learn well, teachers give pertinent examples of the use of subject-specific vocabulary. They check that the meaning of vocabulary is understood. In some subjects, teachers make sure that the texts they use in lessons are pitched appropriately for the reading ability of the pupils. They scaffold writing tasks so that audience and purpose are clear. Teachers model and explain clearly to pupils how to calculate and use data.

The school's work to strengthen the curriculum has had a positive impact. Teachers ensure that pupils are clear about the knowledge and skills they need to learn in their subjects. Staff readily check pupils' understanding of this and address any misconceptions. Feedback is helpful and purposeful. This means that pupils know what to do to improve. Teachers ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are in receipt of specific strategies to help them in lessons. For example, co-educators explain concepts clearly and work effectively one to one.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Governance is not working as it should. This was the case at the last inspection and remains so. This is because the trust has limited capacity to enact the changes required. While there was an external governance review, the trust has not ensured that the local governing body has given the necessary consideration of the findings of this. Recommendations are outstanding. For example, local governors do not fulfil adequately their core delegated functions, such as those linked to monitoring and evaluating relationships and sex education.

Other changes with leadership are having a positive impact. The restructure of senior leadership roles has increased capacity for the scrutiny of the quality of education that pupils receive. The new systems and procedures for quality assurance are well considered. There is greater clarity as to where to put increased support. The training for middle leaders is most beneficial. Curriculum leaders have a clear rationale for improvement. They are taking appropriate action to drive forward school improvement.

Leaders have invested in a comprehensive professional learning programme for staff. This utilises a range of external sources, including prestigious universities, the local authority and other local schools. A coaching model is underway to support and share best practice. Teachers who are early in their careers receive helpful support. While some staff indicate concerns about workload and wellbeing, leaders have taken action to rectify this. For example, with reducing assessment demands and the amount of staff briefings.

Post 16 provision

Needs attention 

Over time, leaders have been slow to ensure that the sixth form meets the needs of the students it serves. Outcomes for A-level courses have not been where they should be. Leaders are addressing a lack of sufficient academic rigour in some A-level courses. They are also looking closely at the moderation of standards where, in some subjects, teachers are overgenerous in their estimations of students' performance. Staff are in receipt of

ongoing training. The school has a suitably rigorous action plan to drive forward improvement.

This is not the same picture as that seen in applied vocational courses, where students achieve well. Students are clear about success criteria and complete high-quality work. Sixth-form students undertake meaningful work-related learning. This includes access to a careers fayre, work experience and a mock interview exercise. Students also make the most of the volunteering opportunities they have. For example, through reading to younger pupils.

Students are in receipt of a wide-ranging personal development offer. This programme includes coverage of content that helps them prepare for adulthood, such as how to manage a budget and avoid debt. Students fully appreciate this input as well as the support and care they receive from the pastoral staff. Leaders work successfully with students to remove barriers to their learning. For example, attendance and retention rates have increased.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

This is a warm and friendly school where pupils are confident learners. They are eager to try something new, such as setting up their own bands or taking part in the many clubs on offer. College captains are integral to the smooth running of extracurricular events, such as charity week. Sixth-form students willingly give their time to help younger pupils. Pupils are happy to undertake leadership roles, such as ambassador for their class. They also contribute to the local community through the youth parliament. Such activities enable pupils to experience success outside of academia as well as develop teamwork skills.

Pupils behave well. They enjoy respectful relationships with staff and each other. They know that staff will always have a listening ear should they need help or support. They feel safe in an environment that takes bullying, including that online, seriously. Pupils know the harm that bullying can cause and are proactive in their stance that it should not happen. For example, they report quickly when they see unkind behaviour. Pupils appreciate and celebrate difference.

While pupils typically want to do well at school, some do not achieve as well as they should. This is because the support they receive in class may be variable. This is particularly the case if a pupil needs help with reading, writing or calculating number. However, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive bespoke support that is helpful for their specific needs. In the sixth form, students sometimes receive insufficient stretch and challenge in their learning. This limits their ability to attain the highest grades. Over time, students' achievement in A levels has been weaker than that seen nationally, although in applied vocational courses it has been better.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to implement their plans with regard to improving the provision for pupils who require support with early reading, literacy and numeracy so that they can

access the full curriculum and achieve well.

- Leaders should improve outcomes in A level in the sixth form through strengthening the curriculum and its delivery.
 - Leaders should continue to improve attendance so that pupils make the most of their education and opportunities afforded to them.
 - The trust should address, with rigour, the deficiencies in governance so that their monitoring and evaluation of actions for school improvement is sharper, enabling them to hold school leaders effectively to account.
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About this inspection

This school is part of 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, who is also the school's principal. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Kathy Herlock.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently makes use of 2 registered alternative provisions.

Principal: Beverley Williams

Lead inspector:

Liz Smith, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Joanna Jones, Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Robinson, Ofsted Inspector

Garry Trott, Ofsted Inspector

Simon Warburton, Ofsted Inspector

Sharon Pritchard, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 28 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,606

Well above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

1,440

Above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

21.08%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.05%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

9.46%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Below average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	44.7%	45.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	40.6%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	36.8%	45.3%	Close to average

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	45.5	46.1	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	43.3	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	43.2	46.3	Close to average

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.31	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.39	-0.03	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	22.5%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	16.3%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	22.2%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	34.6	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	31.0	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	34.7	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.87	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.79	-0.57	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	22.5%	53.1%	-30.6 pp
2023/24 (final)	16.3%	53.1%	-36.8 pp
2022/23 (final)	22.2%	52.4%	-30.2 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	34.6	50.4	-15.8
2023/24 (final)	31.0	50.0	-19.0
2022/23 (final)	34.7	50.3	-15.6

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.87	0.16	-1.03
2022/23 (final)	-0.79	0.17	-0.95

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (revised)	93%	92%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	95%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	92%	94%	Average

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	24.52	35.00	Below
2023/24 (final)	26.83	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	25.76	34.16	Below

A-level value added

A score showing students’ progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	-0.4	0.0	Below
2023/24 (revised)	-0.4	0.0	Below

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	8.6%	8.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	8.7%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	9.4%	9.0%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	24.1%	23.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	25.6%	25.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	27.7%	26.5%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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