

IES Breckland

Crown Street, Brandon, Suffolk IP27 0NJ

Inspection dates

3–4 November 2015

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement in English is not good enough. Despite making strong progress in Year 11 in 2015, too few pupils achieved good GCSE passes in this subject.
- Teaching is not consistently good. Some teachers do not set ambitious targets for pupils.
- The poor behaviour of a very small number of pupils in Year 10 is disrupting learning for other pupils.
- Attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others are too variable. They are too wide in mathematics.
- The teaching of reading, especially for those pupils who struggle, is not sufficiently well structured.
- The quality of pupils' handwriting, especially that of boys in Key Stage 4, is often poor.

The school has the following strengths

- The Principal, supported by an effective leadership team, has overseen a period of enormous improvement in the school. She is very ambitious for the school's future.
- The governing body, the trust (SABRES) and the educational provider (IES) work in a productive partnership. This has been a significant feature in the school's positive development.
- Good leadership has resulted in the quality of teaching improving in key areas of the school. Some teaching is outstanding and this is leading to very strong progress.
- Parents are now very positive about the school. They value the regular contact they have from the school about their child's work and behaviour.
- The great majority of pupils behave well. Their attendance is good and they are proud to be part of the school.
- Pupils feel safe and valued.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well provided for.
- The school offers a broad and varied curriculum, which is well matched to the pupils' interests.
- Pupils are well known as individuals. Their welfare is a priority for the school.
- Subject and faculty leaders are having an increasingly effective impact on the quality of teaching.

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the standard of achievement in English in Key Stage 4.
- Ensure that teachers set ambitious targets for all pupils.
- Eradicate the small amount of disruptive behaviour in Year 10 that is impacting on the learning of other pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Strong leadership has transformed the school. Two years ago, the school was disorganised and leadership was absent; behaviour was poor and lessons were commonly inadequate. Under the leadership of the Principal, the senior team and the educational provider, the school is now on a very positive trajectory. Outcomes are improving in many subjects and almost all pupils behave well.
- Clear planning, focusing on the right things, has allowed leaders to target their support at where it is most needed. This has resulted in the quality of teaching improving in many classrooms. Leaders know their staff well, and realise that more is needed to be done to make sure that all lessons are leading to good learning. The educational provider, IES, has provided well-targeted support for teachers through coaching and mentoring. Regular visits from the IES representative have meant that they have been able to respond swiftly to requests for specific kinds of support.
- The Principal's vision and commitment to the school, coupled with an ambition for every pupil to achieve as well as they can, has been adopted by the teaching and support staff. A coherent 'can-do' culture has developed, which has enabled leaders to challenge and support teachers to improve what they do in every lesson. For individual teachers, this has led to stark improvements in their work.
- The role of department and faculty leaders has improved in the past year. Previously, they were disjointed from the senior leadership team and were not able to influence the work of their teams. This is no longer the case, and these leaders are now monitoring and checking on learning and the quality of teaching alongside senior leaders. The resultant improvement in how much these leaders know, and the extent to which they bring about change, is evident in the better work that pupils are now doing in many subjects.
- The school's assessment systems have also improved. Pupils are tracked as individuals and as groups. Leaders have an increasingly clear awareness of how much progress each class is making in each subject. They are now linking this information to teaching staff and this is helping them to further understand how effective each teacher is at promoting learning.
- The pupil premium grant and Year 7 catch-up funding are spent appropriately. The impact of the interventions that the funding supports are now monitored well. Those that are effective are extended and those with limited impact are being reviewed. This is a recent development, and the impact on disadvantaged pupils' outcomes is varied. For some year groups and intervention groups, the impact has been striking. For others, attainment gaps remain and are in need of review.
- The school's curriculum is expanding and improving as the number of pupils attending the school grows. Leaders have considered the needs and interests of the pupils and offer a good mix of academic and vocational courses in Key Stage 4. These are supplemented by additional courses, such as those in sports leadership, that will support pupils when they move onto their next stage. Links with West Suffolk College are established, and growing, for pupils to access courses as an alternative provision. Currently, very few pupils are accessing such provision.
- A good range of extra-curricular activities support the curriculum. These include sports, arts and science clubs and homework drop-ins. Pupils in Key Stage 4 also have the opportunity to attend catch-up classes in many subjects as they approach their final examinations or controlled assessment deadlines. The school is offering 20 pupils the opportunity to undertake the Duke of Edinburgh bronze award this year.
- The school's actions to prepare pupils positively for life in modern Britain are at an early stage of implementation. Subject and faculty leaders have identified opportunities in the curriculum for lessons and activities to support this work. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social development very well, and has identified that more visits and visitors to the school are needed to expand pupils' understanding of the wider world and the cultural diversity in their own country. These are embedded within the school's development plans.
- A concerted effort to improve communication with parents has successfully established very positive relationships between home and school. During a meeting with an inspector, parents were extremely positive about the impact of the leadership on all aspects of the school's work. They particularly valued the access to teachers and leaders, enhanced by the school's mentoring system.
- Leaders' work to provide careers advice, information and guidance is well-developed. The school is very active in engaging with the local and wider community to forge links with businesses and further education and skills providers. This work is well planned and has seen some early successes for individual pupils whose futures had looked uncertain.

■ The governance of the school:

- has a clear awareness of the strengths of the school and where it still needs to improve. Governors ask the right questions about the information that they receive from school leaders. Their regular presence in school helps them to understand and support the work that leaders, teachers and support staff are doing
 - works closely with the trust to oversee the school's development. They identify where additional help, including funding, is needed. Together, they have forged a very successful relationship with IES, the educational provider, for the benefit of the pupils. IES have provided good quality support for the improvement of teaching and equally effective leadership support. In addition, IES has provided financial support for the development of the school site, including, for example, the building of the new school library in the summer of 2015
 - ensures that performance management systems are in place and are effective in rewarding strong performance and challenge where teaching needs to be better
 - has an increasingly detailed understanding of precisely which subjects are improving and where weaknesses remain. The assessment information that they use to evaluate the school's ongoing performance has improved recently and is now clearer.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's welfare arrangements permeate the entire staff, creating a culture in which pupils feel secure. Those who are vulnerable are very well catered for; staff maintain very frequent contact with parents and, where appropriate, outside agencies.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching is inconsistent across the school. As a result of clear guidance, coaching and support from senior leaders and IES colleagues, the teaching that was previously inadequate has strengthened. These teachers are still some way from being good because their strategies are not flexible enough to allow them to respond quickly to pupils' needs.
- Where teaching is not yet good, a common feature is the absence of teachers checking learning during lessons. Consequently, they miss the signs that pupils have either finished or are not working, or are finding the work either too hard or too easy. This means that opportunities are missed to move learning on more quickly or to consolidate learning by tackling areas of misunderstanding.
- In a small number of lessons, chiefly in Year 10, teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils' behaviour. Because they spend too much time focusing on the very small number of pupils who are misbehaving, some poor behaviour from other pupils goes unchecked.
- Pupils are generally aware of their targets through assessments and feedback. There is, however, some confusion as all pupils have a minimum target and a 'Principal's target', which is more ambitious. In some classrooms, teachers are reinforcing the minimum target as the one to aim for and this is lowering pupils' expectations of what they can achieve.
- The teaching of reading is undeveloped. Pupils joining the school in Year 7 with an insecure understanding of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) do not receive a consistent approach to improving their reading.
- The newly opened library represents an opportunity to promote reading more actively. Its use has only very recently started and it is too early to see any impact.
- A new assessment system has been put in place recently, in response to the removal of National Curriculum levels. This system, although new, has been quickly assimilated into the teachers' own assessment routines and, within departments, teachers have been moderating one another's assessments to ensure consistency. A work scrutiny undertaken in pupils' English work indicated that the moderation has been effective, as there was little difference between the work of a substantial number of pupils taken from several year groups which had been assessed similarly.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support for pupils in lessons and on a one-to-one basis. The quality of information that teaching assistants receive before they support a pupil is variable. Some teachers share their planning and are very clear about the nature of support that specific pupils require. In contrast, other teachers do not provide any information, guidance or planning and expect teaching assistants to simply 'join in' with the learning. In such cases, teachers are missing the chance to ensure precise support for those pupils who need it most.
- Some teaching in the school has improved strongly, and a proportion is already outstanding. Creative teaching, delivered with a powerful mixture of passion and good subject knowledge, for example in the

humanities department, is motivating pupils and generating high quality work. Similarly, albeit with a different approach, very carefully planned and highly structured teaching in the science department is yielding equally good outcomes. In these classrooms, teachers have taken the basic requirements of a lesson and expanded them to ignite interest and a real thirst for learning. Understandably, pupils value these lessons very highly.

- The feedback that pupils receive is overwhelmingly useful and points out routes for improvement. In some classes, pupils are routinely responding to their teachers' feedback to directly improve their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- The school's promotion of pupils' personal development is a work in progress. Much effort has been focused on improving pupils' behaviour so that learning is rarely disrupted. This has been achieved in the vast majority of cases and the work to build positive learning attitudes is now taking priority.
- In Key Stage 3, pupils commonly display very good attitudes towards their lessons; they are keen to learn and in some lessons are brimming over with enthusiasm. Pupils in a Year 8 history lesson were trying to find the identity of Jack the Ripper; they were engrossed in their tasks and excitedly proposed theories based on the source material they had been reading. The quality of the discussion and their work was very high.
- Pupils in Key Stage 4, who have experienced a great deal of change in recent years, have much more variable attitudes. In many classes they are positive and work hard but there are, however, lessons in which pupils do not try hard enough, and this is reflected in the quality of their work.
- Pupils' welfare is a priority for the school. Pupils are confident that they will be supported by staff if they have a problem. Each pupil has a staff mentor who is in monthly contact with their parents to report on basic information such as behavioural rewards or sanctions, academic progress and to hear about any ongoing issues that parents may wish to share with the school. This level of regular contact and communication allows staff to know pupils very well, and bridges the gap between home and school very effectively. This allows a swift response to any emerging issues, such as those associated with pupils' physical or emotional well-being.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. This is because the behaviour of a very small number of pupils in Year 10 is not good enough and is disrupting the learning of other pupils in some lessons. While school leaders are aware of this, the problem remains unresolved.
- In some lessons, pupils' attitudes to their learning are not positive enough. On occasions, this is the product of uninspiring teaching or content that is not interesting. In other instances, it is because pupils lack the resilience to sustain their efforts; they simply stop trying and revert to chatting with their classmates.
- Rates of attendance are rising and matched national levels last year. Currently, they are slightly above national rates. Correspondingly, rates of persistent absence are decreasing. The school is very swift to respond to and provide support for those pupils who are missing too much time. Instances of lateness are very rare. Punctuality between lessons is good and pupils arrive at lessons ready to learn.
- Pupils wear their uniforms with pride and are smartly presented. They conduct themselves well around the school site, helping to create a safe and welcoming environment in which they can learn and socialise during break- and lunchtimes. The overwhelming majority respect their school and its facilities, looking after them well. Graffiti and litter are rare.
- Parents are increasingly positive about pupils' behaviour at the school. Some of those who spoke with an inspector confirmed that the school's support has made a compelling difference to their child's attitudes towards learning.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- The proportion of pupils making or exceeding expected progress in Year 11 in English last year was below national levels. The proportion gaining a grade A* to C in English was well below the national level and was also below the school's predictions. A legacy of previously poor teaching in this subject was too great for recent improvements to overcome.
- GCSE results in 2015 showed that in several subjects, in addition to English, the proportion gaining A* to C grades was below the national average. These results must be considered against pupils' low starting points and the turbulent period that the school has been through in the past two years. However, outcomes in other subjects, with the same pupils, were much better and were in line with, or very close to, national levels. Where these better outcomes occurred, such as in mathematics, science, music, philosophy and ethics, more stable and more effective teaching has been in place.
- Pupils' literacy is in need of further development. The school's library opened at the start of the autumn term 2015 and is only recently beginning to be used for learning. Pupils lack confidence in talking and exploring their thinking in several subjects. Where pupils are challenged to express themselves clearly, typified in one geography lesson seen during the inspection, they rise to the occasion and think deeply about how best to explain their ideas. This is not the case in many other lessons, where simple answers are accepted too readily and teachers do not provide opportunities for pupils to develop important communication skills.
- The standard of presentation has significantly improved in Key Stage 3. Teachers have raised their expectations of how well work needs to be presented and the majority of pupils have responded well. This picture is less positive in Key Stage 4, where the success of efforts to improve the handwriting and presentation of boys in particular has been patchy. The writing of too many boys in Years 10 and 11 is untidy and careless. Too much is also not joined up, which leads to slower and more laborious writing. There are very clear examples of boys making a real effort to change and improve their writing; the outcomes are impressive.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics was very positive in the recent GCSEs. Greater proportions of pupils made more than expected progress from their starting points than nationally. This, given the recent changes in the school, represents a significant achievement. Similar successes were also achieved in science, where teachers combined their efforts successfully to make sure that almost 70% of pupils gained a good GCSE grade.
- Pupils currently in the school, and especially those in Key Stage 3, are making better progress than in the past. Work in their books and assessment information indicate that very few pupils are now falling behind; those who do receive additional support.
- Disadvantaged pupils made broadly the same progress as other pupils in GCSE English last year. Their attainment was slightly lower than other pupils. In contrast, disadvantaged pupils were more than half a grade behind other pupils on average in mathematics. These gaps, as measured by the school's assessment information, remain in some year groups and are closing quickly in others. At present, the picture is much better in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4, where gaps are widest.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are making better progress than has previously been the case. The careful tracking and monitoring of how well this group of pupils are doing is a key feature for the improvements in this area. Interventions are provided by teaching assistants who are clear about their roles and have received appropriate training.
- Pupils make good use of the careers advice and work experience programme to consider their options after Year 11. Many pupils attended a careers fair laid on by the school, which attracted stalls from colleges, sixth forms, apprenticeships and employers, including the armed forces. This helps pupils to make informed decisions about their futures. Many in Year 11 have already decided on their next steps and those who spoke to inspectors about this valued the school's efforts to support them.

School details

Unique reference number	138250
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10005248

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 Comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	430
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kate Curtis
Principal	Alison Tilbrook
Telephone number	01842 819501
Website	www.breckland.iesschools.co.uk
Email address	office@breckland.iesschools.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 January 2014

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is broadly in line with the national average.
- Around 12% of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- Just under one tenth of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards.
- The school works in partnership with West Suffolk College to provide pupils with alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection started as the fifth monitoring inspection since the school had been placed in special measures in January 2014. At the end of the first day of the monitoring inspection, the lead inspector converted the inspection to a full inspection and the inspection team gathered sufficient evidence to be able to make judgements on all areas of the common inspection framework.
- Inspectors observed learning in 26 lessons or parts of lessons. They evaluated pupils' work in lessons and outside them.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, five members of the governing body and the trust (SABRES), a representative of the educational provider (IES), departmental leaders and teaching assistants to discuss their work. They also met with pupils formally and informally to discuss their experiences in the school.
- An inspector met with 15 parents to discuss the improvements made to the school since the previous inspection.
- Inspectors took account of 43 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors spent time observing pupils' behaviour in and around the school, at lunchtimes and during transition between lessons.
- Inspectors evaluated the school's documentation, including self-evaluation records, improvement planning, assessment information, governors' minutes, and safeguarding systems and records.

Inspection team

Chris Moodie, lead inspector

Joanna Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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