

Inspection of Brighton Aldridge Community Academy

Lewes Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 9PW

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils say that they do not feel safe or respected in school. Many consider bullying, racism, sexism and homophobia to be commonplace and unchallenged by leaders and staff. Derogatory terms are regularly used against pupils with autism spectrum disorder and those attending the school's specialist unit. Homophobia has been normalised by the frequent use of offensive language. A culture of disrespect pervades.

Behaviour in lessons is more orderly. In lessons visited by inspectors, most pupils were engaged in the activities planned by teachers. However, low level disruption is commonplace. The school's behaviour log identifies a significantly high number of pupils being removed from the classroom. Provision for these removed pupils is poor with little work being provided to prevent them falling further behind. Pupils' behaviour is often unchallenged by teaching staff. Expectations for pupils are not high enough.

Pupils can participate in a range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. There is an extensive range of sporting activities available. The school benefits from its partnership with Sussex Cricket Club. All pupils receive good careers guidance. Increasing numbers proceed to post-16 education and approximately one third of sixth-form students go on to university.

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

The school curriculum is broad, with a full range of national curriculum subjects. The school operates a three-year key stage 3 with a variety of options on offer. The proportion of pupils taking the English Baccalaureate is similar to national averages with plans to increase further. Teachers use assessment effectively to inform the curriculum. Questioning, feedback and explanation are features of the best practice observed.

Leaders prioritise reading. The timetabled reading session allows all pupils to read for 20 minutes each day. The sessions are successful in creating a culture in which pupils enjoy reading. Pupils who are at the earliest stages of learning to read get additional support to help them catch up. This is helping these pupils to read confidently, accurately and fluently.

The sixth-form curriculum is strong with content supporting academic and vocational pathways. The sixth form is effective in delivering a range of options that students value. Staff take the academic welfare, careers guidance and support of students seriously. They educate students both in terms of their subject options as well as their wider selves. Teachers have good subject knowledge and impart it well.

Pupils' personal development is not promoted well. The content of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is cursory and not valued by pupils. Pupils feel that PSHE is not taken seriously by pupils or teachers. They say the same

resources are used each year, so content is neither hierarchical nor developmental. Pupils do not know enough about respect. They do not respect those who are of a different ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation. The life skills sessions in the sixth form offer a superficial coverage of the key elements of health and welfare. Students are required to attend these sessions.

Pupils attending the specialist unit on site receive suitable care and attention. They access all areas of the curriculum. The support provided enables them to learn well. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive effective assistance. Leaders identify the needs of these pupils accurately. Disadvantaged pupils are known by staff who have a variety of strategies to support them. However, these pupils do not do as well as their peers. The number of internal and external exclusions of disadvantaged and SEND pupils is higher than their peers.

Leaders acknowledge that attendance is a major challenge. The attendance of disadvantaged and SEND pupils is of particular concern. The school does have a range of strategies in place to address poor attendance, but they are not yet having sufficient impact.

The interim executive principal is new in post. She has an exceptionally good understanding of the challenges facing the school. Other senior leaders offer some support, but they have not done enough to tackle poor behaviour, eliminate homophobic and abusive language, and teach pupils how to respect one another.

Governors and trustees understand their roles and responsibilities. The chair of the local governing body is relatively new in post. Governors are now aware of the situation in the school and recent actions suggest they are taking the matter seriously. To date, the trust has provided expertise through subject trust leads and seconded leaders. The school has strong links with other trust schools.

Staff appreciate the support offered to reduce their workload. Teachers who have recently joined the profession feel very well supported. They are developing their practice well, albeit in difficult circumstances.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Pupils told us that they do not feel safe in the school. They feel that their concerns are not taken seriously by staff and that issues are not dealt with effectively. They lack confidence in the fairness of the school's systems to resolve incidents.

Parents do not feel that their children are safe in the school. A meeting with parents raised some serious safeguarding concerns which had not been dealt with appropriately by the school. The systems for reporting and recording concerns are not rigorous enough. Procedures for disclosures are not followed through. Records of pupils receiving education elsewhere are lax.

The single central record and pre-employment vetting checks are compliant. The process is supported by the trust and is rigorous. Leaders of safeguarding have a good understanding of local risks. They know that safeguarding is a priority.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Safeguarding is ineffective. Procedures for dealing with allegations have not been followed through appropriately. Leaders have not established effective systems for reporting and recording safeguarding concerns. Leaders and governors must take urgent action to ensure that the arrangements to safeguard pupils are effective. They need to improve their approach to reporting and recording concerns in line with those identified in the safeguarding policy.
- Pupils' personal development is not promoted well. The PSHE curriculum plans do not have enough depth to instil a culture of respect. As a result, pupils and students have not benefited from a well-planned set of experiences to support their personal development. Leaders and governors should ensure that the PSHE curriculum has regular, high-quality, age-appropriate opportunities to learn about diversity, respect, tolerance and the appropriate use of language.
- Pupils are reluctant to report behaviours which upset or worry them. Too many pupils do not feel that bullying, including racist, sexist and homophobic bullying, will be effectively resolved. Leaders and governors need to make sure pupils feel confident in passing on their concerns to adults in school. They should ensure that systems for reporting and tackling bullying and harassment are consistently implemented so pupils feel safe and confident to report concerns.
- Expectations of pupils' behaviour are not high enough. Poor behaviour is not tackled rigorously. Learning is disrupted, and the policy to manage behaviour is not reducing incidents of poor behaviour. Leaders and governors should ensure that all staff have consistently high expectations. Staff should be supported to tackle pupils' poor behaviour so that pupils are able to concentrate in lessons and feel safe around school.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that leaders and those responsible for governance may appoint early career teachers.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	136164
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10211055
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	873
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	155
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paul Lovegrove
Principal	Stephanie Newman
Website	www.baca-uk.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 November–1 December 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Brighton Aldridge Community Academy is a smaller than average 11 to 19, mixed school which is part of the Aldridge Education multi-academy trust.
- The school has a specialist facility, the Swan Centre, for pupils who have speech and language disorders and pupils who have autism spectrum disorder. This facility is managed by the local authority.
- In total, 24 pupils attend alternative provision at three registered education providers, two alternative provision establishments and four other providers.
- 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 educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- 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 conducted deep dives in English, mathematics, technology, geography and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, talked to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work.
- Inspectors reviewed the procedures for safeguarding and looked at school policies, curriculum documents, attendance records and behaviour logs.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and other staff in the school. They spoke to a group of parents at the start of the inspection and the lead inspector spoke to another parent on the phone. He also met with trustees and governors and spoke with the chair of the trustees online.
- Inspectors considered 116 responses to the Ofsted Parent View online questionnaire and 86 written comments from parents. They considered the survey responses from 41 staff. Details of the pupils’ survey were not sent out by the school, but inspectors looked at pupil surveys conducted by the trust and spoke to a large number of pupils in school, both formally and informally.

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Bullen	Ofsted Inspector
Eliot Hodges	Ofsted Inspector
Stuart Edwards	Ofsted Inspector

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