

Breakwater Academy

Valley Road, Newhaven, East Sussex BN9 9UT

Inspection dates

21–22 May 2019

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
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leadership of the academy is good. Despite a period of significant change and staff turnover, there have been rapid improvements in achievement, behaviour and staff morale since the predecessor school's last inspection.
- Leaders have instilled a consistent and effective approach to teaching across the academy. The academy's strong values and interesting curriculum promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Standards in writing, although improving, lag behind those of reading and mathematics. Pupils do not always present their writing well enough, and most-able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently. Guided-reading systems and skilful catch-up support have raised standards in reading, but few pupils attain at a high level.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are vulnerable are supported well and they make strong progress.
- Attendance levels have improved to be in line with national averages. Pupils feel safe and behave well. The school is a calm and harmonious community and pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- Governors and trust officers provide high levels of challenge and support for leaders. They bring a range of skills to their roles and as a result are helping to drive the pace of improvement well.
- Middle leaders are not yet effectively challenging and supporting teachers in their subjects. They are receiving appropriate support and training and are well placed to drive their subjects forward.
- Effective use of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils has ensured that they are making steady progress, but this needs to accelerate so that they catch up with their non-disadvantaged peers.
- The early years setting is good. Children are happy, inquisitive learners and make rapid progress from their typically lower starting points.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in writing, especially for the most able pupils, and make sure that all pupils take more care with the presentation of written work.
- Ensure that most-able pupils reach the standards they are capable of in reading.
- Develop the roles of middle leaders so that they have the skills and confidence to hold teachers to account for improving outcomes in their subjects.
- Accelerate the progress made by disadvantaged pupils so that it compares favourably with that achieved by other pupils nationally.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have been determined to free the academy from the legacy of low outcomes prior to academisation. Decisive action brought about a period of rapid change and staff turbulence. The present headteacher was appointed in September 2018. She is ably assisted by an executive headteacher from the trust, and a deputy headteacher. They have galvanised the now stable staff team and earned the trust of parents. Since academisation in 2016, leaders have successfully driven improvements because they have implemented clear strategies and raised aspirations for all pupils.
- Professional development is strong. Staff are supported well to achieve their best. Teachers are highly motivated to be 'learners together' with pupils. There is a culture of research and debate within the academy, which contributes to further development of the curriculum and a shared goal of 'best for all' in lessons.
- Senior leaders are keen for middle leaders to take greater responsibility for the development of the academy. Training is in place to increase leadership capacity and build subject leaders' experience of holding one another to account for the teaching of their subjects. However, the full impact of this work has not yet had time to develop.
- Staff feel that their well-being is important to leaders. They say that leaders have very clear ambitions and priorities, and that they focus on the right things to raise standards and expand pupils' knowledge. Unnecessary additional work has been pared down and teachers feel that they have a positive work-life balance. This positivity was summed up by a member of staff who said, 'This has been an amazing year.'
- Leadership of mathematics is highly effective. From a very low base, many more pupils are now working at greater depth in this subject.
- There are clear plans in place for improving standards in reading and in writing. As a result, teaching has strengthened in both subjects. Leaders acknowledge, however, that performance in writing is not yet good enough and that too few pupils, especially among those who are more able, are achieving at greater depth in both reading and writing.
- Leaders use additional funding for pupils with SEND well to ensure that pupils receive the appropriate support that they need to make good progress. Specific interventions are led by skilled teaching assistants and an additional teacher, closely monitored by the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo).
- Additional pupil premium funding is used effectively to support the learning and attendance of disadvantaged pupils. The work of the learning mentor has had a very positive impact on the social and emotional needs of these pupils. Consequently, barriers to their learning are overcome, and pupils attend more regularly, make good progress and flourish across early years and key stages 1 and 2.
- Funding to promote physical education (PE) and sport is well spent. Leaders have identified a range of activities to help improve staff expertise and to increase pupil participation. As a result, the quality of PE teaching has improved throughout the academy, and levels of engagement in active extra-curricular activities have risen.

- The curriculum has been carefully planned and is enriched through a range of visits and opportunities for pupils to find out about the world around them. For instance, a child in Reception was keen to tell inspectors about the effects of deforestation, and Year 6 pupils thoughtfully considered the meaning of democracy following their study of the Second World War.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They take responsibility within the school, for example as play leaders and in forming an academy 'pupil parliament'. Pupils treat one another with the utmost respect and consideration. They learn about different faiths and cultures in a variety of ways, including through quality texts, debate and educational visits.
- Parents are very supportive of the leadership of the academy and are delighted by the improvements in academic achievement and behaviour. Those spoken to felt that leaders are approachable. A typical comment was, 'Our children are safe here and well cared for.'
- The trust supports the work of the academy well, providing additional teaching experts to work alongside existing staff to provide advice and support.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a detailed understanding of the academy's strengths and areas for development. They bring a wide range of skills to the role, and the recent clarification of responsibilities between the multi-academy trustees and the governing body of the academy has enabled governors to be increasingly effective.
- Governors visit the school regularly to monitor for themselves what the headteacher tells them in reports. They have a good understanding of information about school performance in relation to national expectations. For example, they understand the need to improve writing and that most-able pupils should achieve better than they do in reading and writing. The multi-academy trust has been instrumental in recruiting senior leaders and a strong teaching team. This has led to a settled workforce and improvement in the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. There is absolute consistency of approach in systems within the academy. Leaders are held firmly to account by governors to sustain and build on the academy's rapid improvements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have created a strong safeguarding culture. Staff are suitably trained in how to identify children at risk, and what actions to take to keep them safe. Several members of staff questioned were clear about the system for reporting concerns, and case studies show that the academy responds in a timely way when there is a need to refer families to external agencies to safeguard children.
- Records of background checks regarding the suitability of new staff are meticulously recorded on the school's single central record.
- Leaders have identified appropriate training to keep parents and staff up to date on changes or developments in child protection matters. For example, the academy works

with parents and outside agencies to raise awareness of children's vulnerability when using the internet and the risk of children being used to carry drugs from one borough to another.

- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in school and in everyday life. They trust that there is always someone to listen to them in school if concerns arise. They have been taught to keep personal information safe, and are aware of the potential risks posed by social media and playing age-inappropriate games online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Since academisation, leaders have not hesitated to take swift action to support and address specific weaknesses in teaching. As a result, teaching is now good in every key stage.
- Leaders and teachers have developed a series of lessons which help pupils to gain and be able to recall key knowledge across subjects. The impact on learning is that pupils are proud of what they know and can recall, and use and apply their skills in a range of subjects.
- Professional development is a priority, and as a result teachers' subject knowledge is secure. There is consistency in the approach to teaching reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, pupils' prior learning is built upon in a logical manner and enables them to make good progress.
- In mathematics, pupils are taught to use the most efficient methods of calculation and to explain their reasoning clearly. Work is presented neatly. Pupils can solve increasingly complex problems, for example in Year 6 when working on problems related to ratio. Most-able pupils are appropriately challenged in mathematics. As a result, the proportions achieving greater depth in mathematics at the end-of-key-stage assessments have dramatically improved.
- Pupils' workbooks show that there is a standardised approach to the teaching of writing. Teachers model well-structured writing which pupils build on, writing sentences independently. There is not enough balance, however, between this and opportunities for most-able pupils to write independently and at length. Teachers' expectations of the presentation of writing are not high enough.
- Pupils read whole-class texts which are challenging and which develop cross-curricular links with science, writing, geography and personal development. Reading outcomes at the end of early years and key stage 1 are now in line with national averages, often from low starting points. In key stage 2, where there is still a legacy of underachievement to overcome, pupils make good progress and achieve in line with national averages, but not at greater depth. Evidence from listening to pupils reading, and from work in pupils' books, indicates that reading at greater depth is now improving rapidly.
- Teaching assistants are well trained and supported by teachers and leaders. They enable pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged to access the learning in lessons. They ensure that independence is encouraged, as well as helping pupils to structure their learning when necessary. As a result, these pupils make good progress, want to come to school, and have positive attitudes to learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The academy's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Vulnerable pupils receive bespoke, high-quality emotional support which boosts their self-esteem and confidence. This results in pupils being well placed to learn effectively.
- Pupils are keen to play an active part in the school community. They hold their responsibilities as play leaders and 'assembly crew' in high regard. Members of the pupil parliament are proud to be part of the decision-making in the academy and enjoyed their trip to the Houses of Parliament, which enabled them to better understand that people in society and in the school community have different viewpoints and that diversity should be celebrated.
- Leaders are passionate about raising pupils' aspirations and helping pupils experience a range of trips and extra-curricular activities. These are well attended and contribute to pupils' self-development and understanding of the wider world.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe inside and outside of the academy, as well as online. They learn to make healthy lifestyle choices around eating and the importance of physical exercise.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite, respectful and friendly to one another and to staff. They work hard in lessons and discuss their thinking and opinions confidently and respectfully, knowing their views are valued.
- Incidents of extreme misbehaviour resulting in fixed-term or permanent exclusions are now rare. This is because pupils want to learn, to succeed and to have good relationships with one another and with their teachers.
- Pupils' behaviour in the playground is good because they get on well with each other, knowing that help is readily available from adults in the school should they need it. Structured sporting activities, and the 'ABC' club, which offers quiet indoor activities as an alternative to the playground, help maintain enjoyable and safe playtimes.
- Attendance has historically been low. The significant efforts of leaders and the considerable family support supplied by the learning mentor have resulted in a dramatic improvement in rates of overall absence, so that it is now in line with national averages.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- High proportions of pupils started their education with attainment that was lower than typical for their age. Leaders' successful actions have led to a significant rise in pupils' outcomes. Across the academy, current pupils are achieving well in a range of subjects,

particularly mathematics. However, outcomes in writing and in reading at the higher levels have not yet improved as rapidly.

- There has been a comprehensive approach to improving the teaching of phonics. As a result, the proportions of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check have matched national averages since academisation. Pupils throughout the school read unfamiliar words with confidence. As they move through the school, pupils read challenging books, both in class and at home for pleasure. They engage in thought-provoking discussions about their books. Standards in reading have improved to be in line with national averages. Nevertheless, low proportions of pupils attain at a high standard.
- Pupils are very good at explaining what they have learned and remembered. For example, pupils in Year 5 studied the anatomy of flowering plants and the purpose of each part, and could use this information to discuss different methods of pollination. Scientific language is embedded, and most pupils across the academy make strong progress in the science curriculum. Pupils enjoy learning about a range of subjects, and good progress in art was particularly apparent in Year 6. Quality texts drive the curriculum in geography and history, for example the study of the Second World War in Year 6.
- Mathematics is a strength of the school. Extensive staff training has taken place, and the consistency of approach is apparent across classes. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong, and questioning of a high standard helps pupils to deepen their mathematical understanding. Pupils confidently explain their reasoning and have an excellent grasp of basic calculation skills. As a result, standards have risen significantly, including the proportions of pupils working at greater depth.
- Pupils with SEND receive effective academic and pastoral support. Tasks are planned sequentially to match the level of their abilities. As a result, they make good progress and achievement is rising rapidly.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making stronger progress in reading and mathematics than in writing. While progress in all subjects is improving, this needs to accelerate so that achievement reflects more closely the national test results at the end of each key stage.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enter Reception typically below being able to do what is expected for their age. Strong teaching and learning enable them to catch up quickly, and the proportions reaching a good level of development have been in line with or above those achieved nationally over the past two years.
- All adults working in early years form nurturing and caring relationships with children. Children are confident and sociable. They learn about the wider world in age-appropriate ways and are keen to share their knowledge with adults. As one child told inspectors: 'I am going to tell you about deforestation – they cut down the trees to make palm oil and it is bad because we use the air to breathe.'
- Early years staff work closely with parents and with feeder nurseries and playgroups. As a result, the transition to early years is smooth and children settle quickly and

happily into academy routines. There are opportunities for parents to contribute to their children's learning, for example through the children's learning-journey books, which celebrate milestones and achievements throughout the year. Parents told inspectors at the start of the day how happy their children were in the early years.

- Activities inside and outside of the classroom provide a good range of opportunities for children to learn across the early years curriculum. The outdoor area is stimulating for all children, and opportunities to read and write outdoors abound. The role-play areas, for example 'Little Red Riding Hood's house', excite and encourage children's learning.
- Children's emerging writing skills are impressive. They enjoy writing, which is well planned to link with reading. One child wrote, 'The big bad wolf is cheeky because he told a lie and ate grandma and Little Red Riding Hood.'
- Children learn well how to stay safe. For example, when using the bikes, they keep to the cycle tracks with minimal supervision and stop at crossings for other children to pass. They demonstrate consideration by sharing appropriately and happily moving on to other activities when asked to do so by adults.
- All statutory welfare requirements are in place in early years. For example, risk assessments are carried out carefully and accurately to ensure that the setting is a safe place in which to learn. Staff support children's welfare by teaching them routines and kind behaviours towards one another that reduce the risk of harm.

School details

Unique reference number	143120
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10088111

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Isabelle Dennigan
Headteacher	Zoe Griffiths
Telephone number	01273 514 300
Website	https://breakwateracademy.org
Email address	office@breakwateracademy.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Breakwater Academy is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school has been sponsored by the STEP Academy Trust since September 2016. It was previously known as Meeching Valley Primary School.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British or Other White heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND and/or an education, health and care plan is higher than the national average.
- A new headteacher was appointed in September 2018. An executive headteacher from

the trust works alongside the headteacher.

- Two newly qualified teachers and a graduate teacher joined the academy in September 2018.
- The academy meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning throughout the school, spoke to pupils and looked at work in their books. All observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, the leaders of science and mathematics, groups of pupils, representatives from the board of trustees and three governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body.
- An inspector spoke to parents at the start of the day and took into account 18 responses, including written comments, to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also analysed 19 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- A range of documents was reviewed, including the academy's development plan and self-evaluation document, and information about pupils' achievement, attendance, behaviour and safety, curriculum leadership, and governing body reports.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's website to evaluate the quality of information for parents and whether the academy meets statutory publishing requirements.

Inspection team

Lynda Welham, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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