

Burfield Academy

Oaklands Way, Hailsham, East Sussex BN27 3NW

Inspection dates

9–10 May 2018

| Overall effectiveness | Requires improvement |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Requires improvement |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good |
| Outcomes for pupils | Requires improvement |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching across the school is not yet typically good, particularly in key stage 1. Teaching does not routinely probe pupils' understanding well, and support from teaching assistants is not consistently effective.
- Changes to the leadership of the school and teaching staff have unsettled parents' and carers' confidence in leadership.
- Pupils do not consistently apply the skills they are learning in writing to other areas of the curriculum, limiting the quality of work they produce overall.
- Pupils' phonics understanding across the school is variable. Last year's outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check were lower than seen nationally. Improvement is evident but is not yet consistently established.
- Pupils lack sufficient opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects and cultures.
- While improving, attendance overall, including that of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, remains below national figures.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have achieved significant improvement in a short time. They are conspicuously determined to achieve better outcomes for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Effective support from the STEP Academy Trust is enabling rapid and sustainable improvement. The trust demonstrates strong moral purpose, and is committed to securing the positive future of the school.
- Leaders' effective action is leading to rapid improvements in teaching and pupils' progress.
- Teaching in the early years gives children a good start and enables them to make strong progress in their learning. Children are eager to come to school and are confident in exploring new experiences.
- Pupils are polite and considerate towards each other. Relationships between pupils and adults are positive. Pupils are safe and well cared for.
- Behaviour across the school is good. Pupils demonstrate increasingly positive attitudes towards their learning, ensuring that they are well placed to make good progress over time.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, particularly in key stage 1, to iron out remaining inconsistencies so that all pupils make strong progress across the range of subjects, including phonics, by:
 - developing teachers' effective use of questioning to deepen pupils' understanding
 - improving teaching assistants' effectiveness in promoting pupils' progress
 - ensuring that teachers promote pupils' good writing across the curriculum.
- Improve leadership by ensuring that:
 - the breadth of the curriculum is developed effectively, including by promoting pupils' cultural development
 - parents' confidence in leadership is secured by the timely and accessible sharing of information
 - pupils' attendance, including the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, continues to improve.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The new leadership team has swiftly and accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses of the school. It has a clear vision for the future of the school and has lost no time in bringing about substantial change to secure the necessary improvements.
- The executive headteacher and the head of school provide extremely effective leadership through the strong partnership they have forged. They present a consistent message of high aspiration, providing the driving force behind the unrelenting focus on improvement.
- Leaders, with effective support from the trust, are securing important improvements in teaching through a helpful combination of new appointments and improved staff training. Leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning closely, providing precise feedback and support to develop teachers' practice. As a result, although not yet consistently established, teaching is improving securely.
- Teachers value their opportunities to work with colleagues across the trust to share best practice. They speak enthusiastically, for example, about recent training in both mathematics and the development of reading skills. They are keen to incorporate new ideas into their lessons. Staff across the school are overwhelmingly positive about the school's direction and express great excitement about the future.
- Leaders use additional funding effectively, helping potentially vulnerable pupils catch up or keep pace with their peers. For example, leaders are targeting pupil premium funding successfully to support evident improvements in disadvantaged pupils' attendance.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has made helpful use of funding to provide additional staff training about pupils' specific SEN. Teaching staff are effective in applying the strategies they have learned to their lessons. In particular, effective support for emotional needs is helping pupils to persevere with more challenging tasks. This has resulted in improving progress for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Although leaders' successful impact on improving teaching and pupils' current faster progress in reading, writing and mathematics are clear to see, the quality of education in some other subjects is less well developed. For example, pupils' learning opportunities in subjects such as art, music and computing do not yet support them well to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in these areas.
- Leaders promote fundamental British values successfully by linking them in an age-appropriate way to the school's values. In assemblies, leaders celebrate pupils' achievements in demonstrating those values, contributing well to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. However, pupils' opportunities to increase their cultural development are limited.
- Although a number of parents have noticed the positive changes brought about by the actions of the new leadership team, leaders are alert to parents' mixed views on the support and care their children receive and the need for improved communication. While some parents feel that their children are happy and well cared for in school, others have been concerned about frequent changes of staff. Leaders are taking

positive action to boost parents' confidence and improve communication, for example through parent drop-ins, 'pop-in-and-play' sessions and open afternoons.

Governance of the school

- The trust's thorough and detailed examination of the school's strengths and weaknesses established a clear starting point for improvement. The particular skills of trust members afford a strong source of relevant expertise. The trust provides helpful challenge to both the strategic governing body and school leaders, holding them to account to improve the quality of education.
- The trust is fully committed to supporting the school on its improvement journey. Trust members have a precise, short-, medium- and long-term strategy for securing a better quality of education for pupils. The trust provides a high level of professional support for staff at all levels. It invests wisely in the school to increase the capacity to improve. As a result, improvement is clearly ongoing.
- Governors recognise that the changeover to the new trust caused uncertainty for the school community. They are working hard to provide reassurance, for example, through their attendance at parents' evenings and by maintaining a visible presence during school visits.
- Together with school leaders, governors have prioritised actions for school improvement into a sensible plan. They recognise their own roles in moving the school forward and challenge leaders regularly on the progress made. Governors ensure that they are well informed about progress in improving teaching and pupils' progress.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have developed a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Staff are vigilant about pupils' well-being. They know pupils well and raise any changes in behaviour or other concerns swiftly with the designated safeguarding leads. As a result, pupils are well cared for and said that they feel safe.
- Leaders sensibly prioritise comprehensive safeguarding training for all staff. In addition to annual training, staff regularly study safeguarding scenarios to develop their understanding of how to deal with potential issues. Consequently, staff are secure in their knowledge of the school's policies and procedures and confident in taking action to safeguard pupils.
- The designated safeguarding lead maintains detailed records of concerns. She keeps a clear evidence trail relating to any safeguarding actions. Additionally, leaders have sensibly identified risks specific to the local area. They have taken effective action to raise awareness with parents and pupils, in order to increase the safety of pupils inside and beyond the school gates.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Although improving, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not yet consistently good.
- Teachers' use of focused questioning to establish what pupils already know, or to extend pupils' learning, is inconsistent. As a result, opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding and make links with previous learning are limited. Where teaching is stronger, teaching is matched closely to pupils' learning needs so that pupils engage well, are keen to learn and are developing their knowledge and skills rapidly.
- Leaders' focus on developing language, together with increasingly effective teaching of basic skills in punctuation and spelling, is improving pupil's progress in writing. However, pupils do not routinely apply these skills well in other curriculum areas.
- Support staff do not consistently demonstrate a clear understanding of their roles during teaching, sometimes limiting their effectiveness and, therefore, pupils' progress.
- In mathematics, teachers are beginning to address previous gaps in learning through focused teaching. For example, pupils demonstrate clear mathematical thinking when solving addition problems. They explain their methods confidently, recognising which method is most efficient. Additionally, pupils' books typically indicate currently strong progress.
- The consistent quality of phonics teaching is improving well, linked to expert staff training provided by the trust. Pupils usually persevere with difficult words, using effectively the skills they have learned. However, teaching has not yet overcome some unhelpful habits learned previously by pupils, for example guessing unfamiliar words rather than using the strategies taught. This sometimes results in pupils losing the meaning of a text they are reading.
- In science, pupils' clear thinking and thoughtful responses to teachers' questions demonstrate their secure understanding. For example, in one lesson pupils were seen eagerly explaining their ideas around plant growth. However, teaching across other areas of the curriculum such as art, music and computing is less well developed.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils adopt the positive behaviour modelled consistently by staff. For example, teachers and children in Reception asked each other politely to share cutters and rolling pins when shaping dough, demonstrating their cooperation and consideration of others' needs.
- Leaders have successfully invested in support to nurture pupils' well-being. The school uses external advisers effectively to support them with strategies to improve pupils' self-esteem. This has resulted in more positive attitudes to learning for the pupils involved.
- Staff are vigilant and observant. They recognise potential problems and step in swiftly to resolve issues. Pupils reported that there is very little bullying around the school.

They are clear about what to do if they have a problem and are confident about seeking support when they need it.

- Outside of lessons, staff support pupils effectively to develop their independence. For example, pupils learn to hold cutlery correctly so they can successfully cut their food. Staff show pupils how to use equipment and organise games for cooperative play. As a result, pupils' social skills develop rapidly.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about after-school clubs. They enjoy developing their skills in dance, football and karate. They spoke excitedly about cooking club and learning about healthy eating. These worthwhile activities help to broaden pupils' learning experiences.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- New leaders have secured significant improvements to behaviour in a relatively short space of time. They have worked diligently to make sure that adults respond appropriately to any unacceptable behaviour.
- Teaching and support staff have high expectations of pupils' conduct, and provide frequent reminders about positive behaviour. As a result, pupils generally understand what is expected of them and behave well.
- Leaders use the school's detailed behaviour tracking system effectively to monitor incidents. They track patterns in poor behaviour and take action quickly to identify relevant support. School information shows that incidents of poor behaviour have reduced markedly in the current academic year.
- Attendance is improving, reducing the gap between school and national figures. Leaders are relentless in following up pupil absences. They work closely with the education welfare service to support the families of pupils who miss too much school. Consequently, attendance for all groups is now beginning to rise.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- A legacy of weaker teaching over time has resulted in gaps in current pupils' knowledge and understanding. However, pupils are now making better progress.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception Year in 2017 was below that seen nationally, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. Stronger teaching is now resulting in good progress overall in the early years.
- Year 1 pupils' achievement in phonics was below national averages last year. A uniform approach to teaching phonics is now resulting in increasing progress in Years 1 and 2.
- Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is improving, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, the proportion of pupils on track to achieve the standards expected nationally for their age is increasing.
- The work in current pupils' books shows improving progress in developing the structure of their writing. In Year 2, pupils are beginning to write longer pieces, practising and

refining their work over time. Pupils in Year 1 demonstrate a growing confidence with basic presentation and punctuation. However, pupils' progress in writing across the school is not typically strong.

- Pupils do not routinely make good use of the skills learned in writing in other subject areas. For example, pupils do not apply basic punctuation and spelling correctly in their science and history work. Pupils' presentation of work in topic books does not reflect the same careful attention to detail as seen in their English work.
- Most pupils are developing appropriate expression and fluency in reading. Older pupils generally demonstrate positive attitudes to reading and a keen engagement with reading for pleasure. However, progress in reading is not consistent across the school, particularly for older children whose phonics skills are less well developed than those of younger pupils.
- School information shows that progress for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is improving. Leaders have carefully unpicked the reasons for underachievement for each pupil and have targeted additional support to combat them. As a result, the gap between the achievement of these groups of pupils and that of their peers is closing well.

Early years provision

Good

- Children in the early years make strong progress from their starting points. Children's learning journeys show a rapidly improving picture, including for disadvantaged children and those who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- The early years leader has engaged successfully with other local schools across the trust and the local authority to confirm the accuracy of teachers' assessments of children's progress. The early years leader monitors progress regularly and feeds back to teachers on areas for improvement. As a result, standards are rising quickly.
- Teachers in the early years use their knowledge of children well to plan learning that engages the children's interest. They focus on giving children a wide variety of opportunities to practise reading, writing and mathematical skills, for example, in preparing them well for the next stage of their education.
- Children in the early years settle quickly and confidently into class, demonstrating strong and trusting relationships with staff. Teachers capitalise on these relationships, tailoring activities successfully to further increase children's personal and social development. As a result, children are excited about coming to school and keen to take part in activities.
- Teachers in the Nursery use focused questions well to develop children's early phonic knowledge. For example, in one activity, children were matching pictures to letter sounds. The teacher encouraged children to explain their choices, saying the sounds and correctly pronouncing the words. Children showed that they were confident in selecting pictures with the given sound, and could explain why other pictures did not fit.
- Teachers plan a broad range of activities to develop children's understanding of the world around them. In the Reception class, children were excitedly exploring the life cycle of butterflies using magnifying glasses. One child demonstrated his secure

knowledge, explaining, 'The caterpillar will turn into a cocoon, then a butterfly, then we'll let him go.'

- The well-qualified staff in the early years are highly vigilant about children's well-being and safety. Staff speak knowledgeably about the school's safeguarding policies and procedures. They are confident about reporting any concerns, knowing that these will be actioned accordingly. Their detailed knowledge of the children as individuals ensures that they recognise changes quickly and act swiftly to keep children safe.
- Parents of children in the early years generally expressed confidence in the leadership of the school. They spoke warmly of the care given to their children. They feel that teachers are always on hand to answer questions and provide support. However, some parents do not feel fully informed about the progress their children are making.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 140384 |
| Local authority | East Sussex |
| Inspection number | 10046581 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 103 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair | Isabelle Dennigan |
| Executive Headteacher | Jeremy Meek |
| Head of school | Dee Hughes |
| Telephone number | 01323 819309 |
| Website | www.burfieldacademy.org |
| Email address | office@burfieldacademy.org |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Burfield Academy is smaller than the average-sized primary school. There are currently four classes: Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. It is intended that the school will grow by one class each year until the oldest pupils are in Year 6. The school does not include provision for two-year olds.
- Burfield Academy, formerly Hailsham Academy, joined STEP Academy Trust in January 2017. The board members set the strategic direction of the trust, and the trust's senior

leadership team oversees the strategic operational work of the trust. The trust appoints strategic governing body members to work with single- or multiple-trust schools. Strategic governing bodies hold academy leadership teams to account for the performance of the academy.

- The executive headteacher works across Burfield Academy and Hawkes Farm Academy, which is also a STEP Academy Trust school. Both the executive headteacher and the head of school joined Burfield Academy in June 2017.
- Burfield Academy experienced a high turnover of staff in the first year of the school's operation under the new trust.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is significantly higher than the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Discussions were held with the deputy chief executive officer, members of the academy trust and the chair of governors. The inspector also met with the executive headteacher, school leaders and other members of staff.
- The inspector observed pupils' learning in all classes, together with either the executive headteacher, head of school or other members of the school's leadership team.
- Meetings were held with pupils to discuss their learning, the curriculum, behaviour and safety. The inspector also listened to children read and observed behaviour in classrooms, during free time and at the beginning and end of the school day.
- The inspector looked at pupils' work across a wide range of subjects, both during lessons and in a separate work scrutiny with leaders.
- The inspector reviewed a range of school documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, the academy improvement plan, trust documents and policies, information on pupils' progress, minutes of strategic governing body meetings, information to parents and external adviser visit reports.
- The inspector checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, including records of checks on the suitability of staff, and had discussions with the designated safeguarding lead. Behaviour and attendance records were also checked.
- The inspector took into account 19 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 20 additional free-text messages, and spoke to parents at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Ali Dakin, lead inspector

Her Majesty's 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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