

# Brent River College

364B Stag Lane, Kingsbury, London NW9 9AE

## Inspection dates

26–27 September 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher, very well supported by senior and middle leaders, and governors, has improved pupils' achievement, their behaviour and the teaching. Pupils feel valued and are interested in their learning.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers know their pupils well and plan interesting activities that motivate them to make good progress. However, teaching does not always challenge the most able pupils to achieve as well as they should.
- All Year 11 pupils gain GCSE and work-related qualifications. In 2017, almost all pupils gained places in further education or apprenticeships.
- Additional funding is effectively used so that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged make good progress.
- Pupils of all ages enjoy a broad range of subjects that are appropriate for their academic and personal needs.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. They feel safe and secure in school. However, some pupils are over-reliant on adults to guide their learning and behaviour.
- Pupils' attendance is significantly better overall than in their previous schools. However, a number of pupils do not attend regularly.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well. They gain a good understanding of how people from different cultures contribute to life in modern Britain.
- Safeguarding is effective. All staff receive regular training to ensure that they are up to date with the latest guidance.
- Governance is effective. Governors increasingly hold leaders to account for the school's performance. They have ensured that the school's income, including additional funding, is spent wisely.

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the quality of teaching and the pupils' progress further by ensuring that:
  - teachers provide challenging activities, particularly for the most able pupils
  - pupils become less reliant on adults to support their learning and behaviour.
- Take further steps to improve the attendance of pupils who are persistently absent from school.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher, well supported by governors, has steered the school through many significant changes since the last inspection. She has brought about improvements in achievement, teaching and pupils' behaviour. She has reorganised leadership responsibilities so that the three school sites run smoothly and effectively.
- The headteacher, senior and middle leaders have established a culture of high expectations in which good teaching has enabled pupils who had lost interest in study to feel valued, and to behave and achieve well. Leaders acknowledge that teaching needs to be improved even further to ensure that all pupils, including the most able, make substantial progress.
- The school's core values of belief, respect, integrity, vision, excellence, responsibility and courage provide a strong moral code for pupils to aspire to and follow. These values permeate all aspects of the school's work and support the pupils in a growing understanding of fundamental British values.
- Middle leaders provide positive role models for pupils at each site. This contributes much to developing pupils' increasingly positive attitudes to learning and to managing their behaviour.
- Leaders provide many opportunities for members of staff to develop their skills and knowledge. Staff are supported in gaining further qualifications to improve the quality of their teaching or to extend their experience by taking on new subject areas or responsibilities. In the last year, three support staff members have been accepted on teacher training courses.
- The well-balanced curriculum is appropriate for pupils' academic and personal needs, including those pupils in the newly established primary department. At key stage 4, they are able to take GCSE examinations in English, mathematics, science, geography and art. In addition, secondary pupils study a range of work-related accredited courses which include art and design, construction, hospitality and catering, information and communication technology, and sport. All courses provide pupils with opportunities to develop their personal and social skills and improve their self-esteem.
- Effective partnerships with the providers of training away from the school site enable leaders to make reliable checks on pupils' attendance, behaviour and progress.
- In the school's own surveys, parents expressed very positive views about the difference the school makes in improving their children's attitudes and behaviour.
- All pupils receive effective careers advice which helps them make informed choices about their future opportunities for further education or employment with training.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well. Visits to places ranging from the Houses of Parliament to religious centres enable pupils to understand how people from different cultures and backgrounds contribute to life in modern Britain. These outings help pupils gain a good understanding of fundamental British values.

- The pupil premium funding is spent wisely to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make strong progress. For example, staff use effective strategies to develop pupils' self-belief and confidence in their own skills and abilities so that they make good gains in their literacy and numeracy. Differences between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and that of others in the school have been reduced as a result of the strong care and support for vulnerable families.
- The funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is spent effectively. Staff ensure that activities and support are carefully adapted to meet the needs and enthusiasms of this group of pupils. As a result, they make good progress in a range of subjects.
- The local authority provides effective support and helpful advice. Its officers work well with leaders and governors to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils are given every opportunity to succeed. The officers hold the school's work in high esteem and have confidence in referring pupils with increasingly complex needs and difficulties.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governance is effective.
- Governors are increasingly skilled in ensuring that leaders and teachers are accountable. Minutes of past meetings of the management committee show that questions are raised about attendance, behaviour and academic outcomes. Since the last inspection, governors have put in place well-considered arrangements for the appraisal of the headteacher and have a good understanding of the process of setting targets for staff.
- The school's finances are carefully monitored through careful internal checks that are externally audited to ensure that the best value is achieved. Governors, in partnership with senior leaders, have ensured that the pupil premium and the special educational needs funding are spent wisely and are having a positive impact on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding and the safety of pupils are priorities in the school. Staff have a thorough understanding of the most up-to-date guidance, attend regular training and use it well to remain vigilant and alert to any concerns arising about individual pupils.
- High levels of staff supervision at each of the three sites, on trips and visits, and at work and college placements help to keep pupils safe.
- Staff work effectively with external agencies such as social services when concerns arise. Records of actions taken, meetings held and professionals involved, including parents, are detailed.
- Leaders have made sure that the school environment remains safe and secure across all three sites. Visitors are checked on arrival and all the relevant checks on the suitability of adults to work with pupils are complete.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is consistently good, which ensures that pupils make good progress. The headteacher, together with senior and middle leaders, has established a positive atmosphere for learning and clear expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are a strength of the school. Teachers know their pupils well and the pupils in turn respond very well to the 'homely' and welcoming atmosphere. Adults use the school's information about pupils' skills in different subjects to plan interesting activities. As a result, pupils are encouraged to concentrate and persevere with their studies.
- Pupils in the new primary department have settled in well. Classrooms and resources are bright and attractive and provide a stimulating environment in which to learn. In art, pupils, in their short stay in the school, had already carefully shaped in clay the different fruits that they had previously tasted in science. While doing so, they held interesting discussions with adults about the different senses involved in trying food. Their speaking skills, as well as their artistic and scientific understanding, progressed well.
- In English, pupils have stimulating and regular opportunities to develop their comprehension and writing skills. For example, pupils in Years 8 and 9 confidently practised various ways in which they could extend their answers by using a range of persuasive language. Work in English is well organised and activities are carefully matched to the pupils' individual skills.
- Mathematics is well planned to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. Their skills are readily applied to their work-related learning, for example in construction and cooking.
- Overall, teachers plan interesting activities that stimulate pupils to learn well. However, sometimes, activities do not make sufficient intellectual demands to enable the most able pupils to make substantial progress.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Despite the fact that many pupils experience significant personal challenges in their lives, relationships throughout the school are positive and respectful. Pupils commented that they really appreciate the high levels of care and support they receive.
- When they arrive, pupils are quickly helped to accept the school's high expectations. This gives them the confidence to improve themselves so that they can take an increasingly active interest in their studies.
- At the end of each day, pupils discuss with their teachers and tutors how well their day has gone. This activity is very beneficial in improving pupils' self-esteem and helping them to understand how to learn successfully.

- Pupils regularly participate in sports and physical education. These opportunities make a strong contribution to their physical and emotional development and well-being.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying and how to remain safe. This includes how to stay safe while using games, websites and social media. The school's computer network prevents pupils from using inappropriate sites.
- Effective safety arrangements and risk assessments are in place for checking the attendance, behaviour and safety of those pupils who attend off-site training.
- Parents, staff and pupils who communicated with inspectors stated that the school is a safe place. There were no concerns raised by parents or staff regarding the pupils' safety.
- Pupils' attendance improves the longer they remain at the school, and is significantly better overall than in their previous schools. Although attendance is monitored effectively, the school's information shows that a significant minority of pupils do not attend school regularly.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils reported that they love being in a small school where they are given a fresh chance to succeed. Staff listen and help pupils to understand their emotions and give them effective strategies to manage their own behaviour and learning.
- The school's records show that incidents of disruptive behaviour have reduced over time. Staff manage any unacceptable behaviour in a calm and skilled way so that pupils are able to resume their learning and do not disrupt others. Exclusions are used sparingly. When they are used, pupils attend one of the three sites other than their usual one for a fixed amount of time to continue their education.
- Behaviour around the school and in classrooms is good. Relationships are positive between staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves. Pupils reported that 'teachers go out of their way to help us and they talk to us on our level'. Pupils in turn show respect for adults in the school and make efforts to make sensible choices. Nevertheless, pupils are sometimes over-reliant on staff to guide and support their learning and behaviour. This is why behaviour is not outstanding.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Typically, pupils enter Brent River College with gaps in their learning because of negative experiences of school and poor attitudes to education. Assessments made soon after arrival across a range of subjects show that pupils' attainment is generally low.
- Teaching-group sizes are small. For these reasons, information about achievement needs to be interpreted with caution because analysis of trends or comparisons with national results are misleading.
- Pupils from different backgrounds, including those who are disadvantaged, make strong gains in their literacy and numeracy as a result of good teaching. Pupils make

good progress in their speaking skills so that they become more confident in expressing their thoughts. They learn to value each other's contributions in class.

- All pupils gain GCSE and work-related qualifications. In 2017, the provisional results for Year 11 pupils show that just over three quarters of pupils gained five GCSE passes. This represents a significant improvement on the previous year's results.
- Although key stages 1 and 2 pupils have settled in well, it is too early to comment on their progress.
- Pupils are successful in gaining a range of work-related qualifications, such as the European Computer Driving Licence. Success in these courses gives pupils self-confidence and valuable skills to study on their own as well as providing a useful stepping stone to further study.
- Visits to classrooms and scrutiny of work in books across all key stages show that pupils make good progress across a range of subjects, including in English and mathematics.
- In personal development sessions, pupils learn the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. In support of this work, the school ensures that pupils have a choice of healthy and nutritious meals at lunchtimes, prepared by the school's on-site chef.
- Those who attend off-site training make good progress in their catering, construction engineering and personal development courses. They often gain college places in these work-related areas.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. This is because staff give them strategies that help them to overcome their difficulties.
- In 2016/17, one in five pupils were reintegrated into mainstream schools, and almost all Year 11 pupils gained places in further education or apprenticeships. Pupils are effectively prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- Pupils achieve well in the range of areas of the curriculum. For instance, they work collaboratively in cookery lessons, carefully weighing out ingredients and following recipes, so that they develop a range of independent skills for living.
- The attendance of a significant minority of pupils who find it difficult to come to school regularly has had a negative impact on their progress and achievement.
- The most able pupils make good progress. However, teachers do not always set sufficiently challenging work to enable them to deepen their knowledge and make the most rapid possible progress.

## School details

Unique reference number	133660
Local authority	Brent
Inspection number	10039349

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	40
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Terry Hoad
Headteacher	Vivien Dean
Telephone number	020 8937 3763
Website	<a href="http://www.brentrivercollege.london">www.brentrivercollege.london</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@brc.brent.sch.uk">admin@brc.brent.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	15–16 July 2014

## Information about this school

- Brent River College caters for up to 62 boys and girls aged between five and 16 who have been permanently excluded from their mainstream schools, or who are at risk of permanent exclusion. All pupils have a range of complex needs, including social, emotional and mental health, and behaviour difficulties. There are more boys than girls.
- Typically, many pupils join and leave the school at different times of the year.
- The school operates on three sites. Key stages 1, 2 and 3 classes are located at 364B Stag Lane, Kingsbury, London NW9 9AE. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are taught at the Poplar Grove Centre, Poplar Grove, Wembley, London HA9 9DB. For courses in hospitality and catering and personal development, pupils attend the Welsh Harp, Cool Oak Lane, London NW9 7NB.
- Very few pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Most pupils have additional special educational needs.

- The school provides a range of services to local schools to help prevent exclusion and manage pupils' behaviour.
- Two thirds of pupils are supported by the pupil premium funding, almost three times the national average.
- Almost all pupils are from minority ethnic groups, well above the national average. The largest groups are from African and Black Caribbean heritages.
- Off-site training is made available for pupils to extend their learning experiences. The school offers the following activities:
  - construction and engineering at Redwood College, 485 Greenford Road, Greenford UB6 8SR
  - music technology at Middle 8 Studio, Heather Park Drive, Wembley HA0 1TA.
- A third of pupils across the school are involved with the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) because of their social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school does not receive Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding.
- Since the last inspection in July 2014, there have been many changes. In October 2014, the school changed its name from Stag Lane Pupil Referral Unit at Library Buildings to its current name. At the same time, it began to accept key stage 4 pupils who were formerly based at the Poplar Grove Centre. In April 2015, the school acquired the Welsh Harp site for work-related courses. In September 2017, the school opened its new primary department for pupils from key stages 1 and 2. The school building was refurbished extensively over the summer holidays.
- In July 2014, when the school was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning across all three sites. All visits to classrooms were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors held informal discussions with two groups of pupils and listened to them reading in class.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors took into account the school's own analysis of the views of pupils and parents.
- There were 18 responses to the questionnaire for staff and no responses to the questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, staff, the chair and vice-chair of the management committee, and two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed key documents and policies, including those related to safeguarding. They also scrutinised pupils' workbooks and learning files, and the school's information about pupils' attainment and progress.

## Inspection team

David Scott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Mary Geddes

Ofsted Inspector

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