

Brentwood County High School

Address: Seven Arches Road, Brentwood, Essex, CM14 4JF

Unique reference number (URN): 145474

Inspection report: 10 March 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	●
Expected standard	● ● ● ● ● ●
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✓ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

The school's approach to inclusion is a notable strength. It is underpinned by strong leadership and precise, diagnostic assessment. Pupils' needs are accurately identified through close collaboration with families and external agencies. Regular review processes ensure that barriers are promptly identified, addressed and reviewed.

There is a coherent set of interventions aligning academic support with pastoral care. Leaders have strengthened provision through small-group teaching, bespoke curriculum pathways and tailored programmes for those with the most complex needs. 'The House' offers personalised support for pupils with additional needs. This helps them build resilience, develop positive mental health and succeed in school.

High-quality teaching is informed by regular staff briefings and precise pupil information. Inclusion is deeply embedded in the school's ethos, with leaders ambitious for all pupils. Pupils' outcomes are carefully monitored, contributing to tangible improvements in their learning. Pupils feel part of the school.

Provision has been strengthened through targeted staff development that ensures consistent support for pupils is used consistently well. External partners speak highly of the school's support for vulnerable pupils, reflecting a wider culture where pupils and families feel known, supported and valued.

Pupil premium funding is used highly effectively. The school provides mentoring, attendance support and bespoke tutoring. These have helped pupils to improve their behaviour, attendance and achievement. Children who are looked after receive strong, well-coordinated support with consistent liaison and tailored tuition. Alternative provision is thoughtfully considered for those who struggle to access the school's mainstream offer.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

Pupils' progress through the curriculum shows an improving picture. Leaders have ensured that foundational knowledge is secure in reading and mathematics. While many pupils write well, some are still developing confidence and accuracy in spelling and handwriting.

Achievement in national assessments is improving. This is happening over time. Outcomes for key groups show notable strengths. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils are making clear progress. This is supported by stronger staff awareness of their needs and tailored intervention. Gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and their peers have narrowed and continue to do so.

Pupils are increasingly developing the knowledge and skills needed for their next steps. Their work reflects their progress through the subjects they study. Improved progress in core

subjects and the securing of foundational knowledge in reading and mathematics support pupils' preparedness for future education or employment.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders' work on attendance is informed and increasingly effective. Daily analysis helps leaders identify pupils needing targeted support quickly. This enables them to provide bespoke interventions that help pupils to attend more regularly. Leaders reinforce positive attendance through visible celebration and rewards. There are notable improvements in the attendance of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This means that pupils who have the greatest needs are in school and learning.

Behaviour across the school is calm and orderly. Warm relationships across year groups and strong role modelling by older pupils foster a sense of community and belonging. Leaders have also established a calm space providing curriculum access and clear guidance for pupils needing additional intervention, helping them to improve their behaviour.

Clear expectations and consistently modelled routines underpin this culture. Leaders' visible presence and consistent application of rules and sanctions reinforce their high expectations. Around the school, systems such as 'stop and drop' and strong staff visibility ensure smooth transitions and positive conduct. Procedures for addressing bullying, discrimination and incidents of poor behaviour are well understood by staff and pupils. They are responded to swiftly and effectively, and pupils know this.

Adjustments for pupils with SEND are increasingly effective, reflected in stronger improvements in both attendance and behaviour for this group. Targeted interventions and clear structures help ensure that pupils with SEND and those that are disadvantaged are supported appropriately and can engage successfully in school life.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The curriculum across the school is well sequenced and taught by skilled staff. Pupils who need additional support in English and mathematics receive extra teaching time to strengthen their core knowledge, ensuring that they have sustained opportunities to prepare for their next steps.

Teachers typically demonstrate strong subject expertise. They use the school's 'ACE' approach to help pupils engage confidently with new content and make progress. Modelling and scaffolding are used well in most subjects. Improved assessment processes and planned subject curriculums are improving the teaching quality. Pupils produce high-quality work and show a secure grasp of their learning.

Leaders have considered pupils' starting points carefully, using data and progress tests to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. Additional interventions are in place for pupils whose basic skills present barriers to learning. Work to support the weakest readers and those that struggle with mathematics is having a positive impact. Leaders are aware that this needs to be replicated to support pupils' writing.

Experienced staff are deployed strategically to support pupils with the greatest learning needs. Leaders' targeted training and curriculum adjustments aim to ensure that these pupils can access the curriculum. Current actions are improving this support, though variability in assessment and checking for understanding in some subjects can still limit how effectively adaptations are implemented.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders demonstrate a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. This is because leaders show strong capacity to evaluate and act, underpinned by coherent systems and ongoing review. There is a cohesive and considered approach to improvement, which has gathered momentum.

Governors provide transparent challenge, demonstrating a firm grasp of their statutory responsibilities. They have a clear focus on wellbeing, inclusion and the school's long-term vision. Governors have meaningful insight into the school's priorities and hold leaders to account effectively.

Leaders make strategic decisions that benefit pupils, particularly those who are vulnerable, disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Safeguarding systems are robust, and support for vulnerable groups is coherently planned and woven through the academic and pastoral team's work.

Leaders work proactively with parents, families and community groups. They are active in the community and want to work together. This underpins the trust's 'cooperative values'. Together, all stakeholders feel they make valuable contributions to school improvement. All want the very best for the school and the pupils who attend.

Partnerships enhance curriculum development, professional learning and shared approaches. This has contributed to increasing consistency and rising achievement. Early career teachers receive useful support and value the tailored guidance they receive.

A wider culture of professional growth and stability strengthens staff confidence. This contributes positively to morale and wellbeing in a school where staff feel proud to work.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The personal development programme is well planned and reflects pupils' needs and the area they live in. It is woven through lessons, tutor time, assemblies and whole-school events such as 'circle days' and 'culture week'. Careers education is impartial, personalised and well sequenced. This prepares pupils for adulthood through clear guidance on academic, technical, apprenticeship and employment pathways.

Pupils articulate confidence in expressing themselves. They feel strongly that, 'It is ok to be different,' reflecting a culture of respect, inclusion and ethical understanding. They demonstrate secure knowledge of protected characteristics and British values, applying these to real-life situations. Tutor-time reading choices allow pupils to explore important ethical and social issues through carefully selected texts, supporting reflection on values and beliefs.

Cultural diversity is celebrated, with pupils valuing opportunities to explore cultures beyond their own. There is a broad enrichment offer, including arts, music, sport, theatre visits and student-led clubs. Older pupils support younger cohorts to develop their social skills and help them to identify the subjects they wish to continue in key stage 4.

Pupils are taught to stay safe and have a good understanding of healthy relationships and online and offline safety. A cohesive pastoral, safeguarding and wellbeing system ensures that pupils feel safe to seek help when needed. There is tailored support available for pupils through spaces such as the 'Green Room' and 'The House'. Pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and other vulnerabilities, are well cared for.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of the strengths and priorities within the sixth form. Strategic actions to strengthen teaching, assessment and curriculum alignment are having a positive impact. Teaching is ambitious, staff subject knowledge is strong and adaptations are well judged across most subjects.

Achievement in the sixth form is improving over time. Leaders' renewed focus on accurate assessment, supported by external moderation, ensures that students increasingly understand their attainment. They know what they need to do to improve. Academic reading initiatives are beginning to develop students' ability to engage with complex texts.

Pastoral support and careers guidance are significant strengths of the sixth form. Students benefit from personalised one-to-one guidance and strong tutor relationships. Students describe themselves as 'thriving' and developing a passion for their subjects, reflecting the impact of these support structures.

Impactful experiences, such as university visits, build confidence. The personal development curriculum prepares students effectively for life beyond the sixth form. Students appreciate open discussions about what they can expect when they leave school. Students value the wide range of experiences offered and other enrichment opportunities. Students want to get involved and also want to help others. For example, they support younger pupils with mentoring and help staff around school. This models positive attitudes for younger pupils.

The holistic and inclusive approach in the sixth form is appreciated by students. This helps them to embark confidently on university routes, apprenticeships and employment.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Belonging is a defining feature of school life. Pupils describe a community where differences are respected and where, 'It is ok to be different.' Relationships between staff, pupils and families are warm, supportive and built on mutual respect. Pupils feel included in all aspects of school life, with older pupils actively supporting younger peers during key moments such as options choices.

Pupils experience a school where learning is enjoyable, ambitions are high and support is strong. They speak confidently about lessons, benefiting from a well-planned curriculum. Teaching uses clear routines, modelling and retrieval to help them learn well. Those who need extra support, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, receive well-matched interventions. Specialist spaces such as the 'Green Room' and 'The House' help them overcome barriers, build confidence and access their learning.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are positive. The school is calm, orderly and purposeful, with clear expectations and consistent routines. Bullying and intolerance are rare. When issues arise, teachers act quickly. Staff use them as opportunities to teach fairness, respect and right and wrong. Pupils say they feel safe, know how to seek help and trust staff to respond. As a result, pupils want to be in school, and attendance is improving.

The enrichment offer further supports pupil development. Clubs, cultural trips and student-led activities provide rich experiences beyond the classroom. This is further complemented by the school's 'circle days'. Here, activities are planned to help build cultural capital and develop character. Older pupils feel well prepared for their next steps through impartial careers advice, employer engagement and personalised guidance.

The school's mantra of 'as character grows, achievement flourishes' underpins the school's drive to develop the whole pupil. Pupils gain a secure understanding of healthy relationships, protected characteristics and life in modern Britain. They grow into confident, considerate young people. As a result, pupils are well rounded and empowered and contribute positively to their community.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that pupils have the skills and support to develop their writing so that they may convey their observations, thinking and ideas with clarity and purpose. This includes help with handwriting for those who need it.
 - Leaders should ensure that good practice is consistently embedded across all classrooms to further strengthen teaching and the curriculum.
 - Leaders should ensure that all aspects of the personal development programme are carefully tailored to the needs of pupils.
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About this inspection

The headteacher of this school is Stephen Bonnar.

This school is part of the Osborne Co-operative Academy Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Paul Griffiths, and is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Trisha Jaffe.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with members of the school's leadership, the chair of the trust, the CEO and the local governing body.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school makes use of 3 alternative provisions, including 2 that are unregistered.

Headteacher: Stephen Bonnar

Lead inspector:

Louise Cooper, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Joanna Jones, Ofsted Inspector

Garry Trott, Ofsted Inspector

Jane Bennett, His Majesty's Inspector

Andy Daly, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 10 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,103

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

1,405

Above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

25.43%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.09%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

12.51%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Well below average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	42.5%	45.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	42.5%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	29.3%	45.3%	Below

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	43.2	46.0	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	41.1	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	38.7	46.3	Below

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.38	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.59	-0.03	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	33.3%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	22.2%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	14.8%	25.2%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	34.4	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	32.4	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	29.6	35.0	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.86	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-1.25	-0.57	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (revised)	33.3%	53.1%	-19.8 pp
2023/24 (final)	22.2%	53.1%	-30.9 pp
2022/23 (final)	14.8%	52.4%	-37.6 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (revised)	34.4	50.4	-16.1
2023/24 (final)	32.4	50.0	-17.6
2022/23 (final)	29.6	50.3	-20.7

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.86	0.16	-1.03
2022/23 (final)	-1.25	0.17	-1.41

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (provisional)	86%	91%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	98%	93%	Above
2021 leavers (revised)	92%	94%	Average

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	27.81	34.99	Below
2023/24 (final)	26.25	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	22.02	34.16	Below

A-level value added

A score showing students’ progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	0.0	0.0	Close to average
2023/24 (revised)	-0.2	0.0	Below

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	7.8%	8.1%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	7.9%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	8.4%	9.0%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	21.5%	21.9%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	21.5%	25.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	28.9%	26.5%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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