

IES Breckland

Crown Street, Brandon, Suffolk IP27 0NJ

Inspection dates 21–22 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Too many students fail to make sufficient progress and they do not attain the standards of which they are capable.
- Teaching is inadequate. It does not expect enough of the students. The work set for students is based on an inaccurate understanding of what they can do. In some instances, for example in English, the standard of students' work has declined since they started at the school.
- Too many students have experienced frequent changes of teacher. In autumn 2013, the departure of some key staff, including the Principal, seriously disrupted the education provided by the school.
- Behaviour is inadequate and disrupts some lessons. Students, parents and staff all expressed concern about misbehaviour.
- The school's own evaluation of the quality of teaching and student achievement is inaccurate. The school has not been able to improve because school leaders have not assessed the school's performance adequately or devised strategies to improve it.
- The management of teachers' performance is ineffective. Improvement targets for individual teachers lack precision. Leaders rarely check whether teachers are making progress towards meeting their targets.
- Governors have not ensured that the school meets requirements to keep children safe.
- Governors have been inquisitive but insufficiently challenging. They do not know how well the school is doing.

The school has the following strengths

- Standards in mathematics are generally high.
- Some teaching is outstanding which helps a few students to make exceptional progress.
- The quality of the school's provision for students' spiritual and cultural education is good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors scrutinised self-assessment documents, action plans, records of lesson observations and a range of other school documents, including records of governors’ meetings.
- Inspectors visited 32 lessons or part-lessons to gather evidence about the impact of teaching on learning and behaviour.
- Inspectors spent a significant amount of time scrutinising students’ written work in order to evaluate their progress over time, particularly in English and mathematics. Work done in other subjects was scrutinised during visits to lessons. Inspectors visited some classrooms at the request of the school.
- Inspectors met with the acting Principal and business development manager, other senior managers, middle leaders, some of the teachers and representatives of the governing body, including the Chair of Governors. Inspectors talked with parents after school and by telephone. Inspectors took account of the views of the approximately 40 parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) by the end of the inspection.
- Inspectors received completed questionnaires from 25 staff. The school has 18 teachers.
- Inspectors met with individual students, and small groups of students, at break times and at the end of the school day. In addition, a meeting was held with students from all year groups.

Inspection team

Ian Seath, Lead Inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Piers Ranger

Additional Inspector

John Mason

Additional Inspector

Full report

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

Information about this school

- IES Breckland is smaller than most secondary schools. It opened in September 2012, having registered with the Department for Education as a free school academy to take up to 500 pupils.
- The school occupies the premises of the former Breckland Middle School. The premises are owned by SABRES educational trust. The trust has appointed International English Schools UK Limited (IES) as its educational provider.
- At the time of inspection, the school was being managed by an acting Principal who is an experienced school leader and manager. He is also an executive within IES. A new Head of English joined the school from Sweden during the week of the inspection. Coordination of the provision for students with special educational needs and disabilities has only been established recently. An existing teacher was promoted to Head of Science the day before inspectors arrived.
- At the time of the inspection, a new Principal was due to join the school imminently, and a new Head of Mathematics after Easter 2014.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium is well below the national average.
- The proportions of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are well below average. The proportion supported through school action is also well below average.
- The proportion of students of ethnic minority heritage is very low.
- Two students receive alternative provision at Thetford Free School.
- At the time of inspection, the school had students from Years 7 to 10 on roll. No national examinations have been taken and therefore no validated results are available. Students in Year 10 had only been undertaking GCSE work for around four months.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - making sure that students are taught by a permanent group of high quality teachers
 - acting with determination to eradicate inadequate teaching
 - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve and plan their lessons so that all students, and especially the most able, are fully stretched
 - sharing the best teaching practice that exists in the school more widely
 - focusing on the progress that students make when evaluating teaching rather than on the teaching activities
 - improving the consistency and rigour of homework and teachers' marking
 - improving assessment and the use of data to check on the impact of teaching.

- Raise students' achievement in all subjects and key stages by:
 - ensuring students practise skills in numeracy and literacy in lessons other than English and mathematics
 - tackling the gaps in attainment between boys and girls in English and mathematics
 - tackling students' poor behaviour by making sure that teachers manage behaviour consistently across the school
 - ensuring that students understand what they need to do to improve their work
 - making sure the curriculum meets the needs of all students.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - simplifying the way that school leaders check on performance so that school improvement plans are based on more accurate information
 - making sure that teaching, learning, marking and homework are monitored properly by subject leaders
 - providing additional training for governors, especially in using data to evaluate school performance
 - ensuring that performance management holds teachers to account for the success of their students.

- Urgently tackle weaknesses in safeguarding and recruitment procedures.

- Urgently fill vacant management and teaching posts.

An external review of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Standards of pupils' work across different subjects indicate that students are often around one year behind their peers nationally. Achievement levels are very poor. The school's own data indicate that students eligible for the pupil premium make inadequate progress. The progress made by disabled students and those who have special educational needs varies widely across the year groups.
- Students perform poorly in subjects such as English, modern foreign languages and music. However, students achieve well in mathematics. The school's initial assessments for the autumn term of 2013 indicate that these major differences in performance between subjects are persisting.
- In English, girls attain higher standards than boys, whereas, in mathematics boys outperform girls. These gaps between boys' and girls' attainment are too wide. In particular, too few boys reach high standards in English and too few girls do so in mathematics.
- Students make slow progress in lessons. Students' workbooks show that progress over time is inadequate. In English, the work of some students has declined since joining the school. In contrast, the best progress was seen in some students' mathematical workbooks.
- Some students recognised that standards in their English work had fallen. They said that this happened when they had a change of teacher. The work inspectors saw in students' books confirmed the school leaders' view that too few of the more able students reach the higher levels of attainment.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate and this is reflected in the poor quality of work done by many students.
- Inspectors found serious discrepancies between teachers' recorded assessments and the standard of work done in classrooms and students' books. Assessment information is not used properly to plan what students should learn in lessons. Work is rarely pitched at the right level for students. Expectations of what some students should learn are too low.
- Frequent changes of teacher have led to inconsistent approaches to teaching. In turn, this frustrates students and slows their learning. This was articulated to inspectors by both parents and students.
- Not all teachers have sufficient subject expertise. Teaching is often ineffective because teachers lack subject knowledge.
- Teaching for the most able students is weak. This is reflected in the low proportion of students reaching the attainment levels of which they are capable.
- The marking of written work is often poor. Some books seen by inspectors had not been marked since term began. In others, teachers' marking was sporadic and corrections to spelling and grammar were rare. Moreover, some teachers' comments contained spelling errors. When questioned, very few students knew how to improve their work.

- The school policy for the teaching of literacy and numeracy in subjects other than English and mathematics is rarely implemented.
- Support for students who need extra help is weak. For example, staffing of the school's 'nurture' provision, intended for those with the most significant needs, has been significantly reduced to enable staff to teach in the main school.
- Many parents are dissatisfied with teaching and homework.
- There are pockets of excellent teaching, but these are not shared across the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate

- The behaviour of students is inadequate. There is too much persistent low-level disruption in lessons. Too often, students chat, disturb others and do not get on with their work. This is not challenged sufficiently by teachers. Such misbehaviour can become serious and senior managers need to be summoned.
- Students who talked to inspectors expressed anxiety about disruptive behaviour affecting their learning. They confirmed inspectors' observations that the school's behaviour policy is not implemented rigorously in classrooms. School leaders do not analyse information in the behaviour log routinely. As a result, they are unaware of any trends or patterns of poor behaviour.
- While many students are polite, helpful and loyal to their school, and are anxious to show off the school at its best, some behaviour in corridors is unruly.
- Students noted that if bullying occurs, which often takes the form of name-calling, it is usually addressed promptly. Approximately half the staff who replied to the inspection questionnaire disagreed with the statement that 'behaviour in this school is good'. A slightly lower percentage of parents who responded to Parent View also disagreed that the school promotes good behaviour.
- The school's work to keep students safe is inadequate. No member of staff has had 'safer recruitment' training yet teachers have been recruited, including some from overseas. Five staff members have not undertaken proper safety training. The safeguarding policy has no 'named person' and the Principal and designated person responsible for safeguarding students are not trained to a sufficient level. These omissions demonstrate a lack of rigour and misunderstanding of safeguarding requirements.
- Attendance is close to the national average for secondary schools. The proportion of students who were persistently absent was high in the last academic year. The number of fixed-term exclusions is too variable for trends to be clear.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- The school's leaders have failed to provide a safe and orderly environment for students to learn and achieve their full potential. The school's written self-assessments are inaccurate. Action plans are not grounded in a full understanding of what is wrong and what needs to improve. Moreover, plans rarely specify what staff need to do to put things right. This lack of precision, at

all levels, has meant that progress towards targets has not been monitored carefully. School leaders have not recognised the extent of the schools' serious underperformance until very recently.

- Senior managers have a vision for the future development of the school and are working hard to implement it. However, the inadequacy of teaching and the disruptions to it because of frequent staffing changes have held the school back. This is made worse by inaccuracies in assessment and poor analysis of student performance.
- The management of teachers' performance is not good enough. Targets for the performance of individual staff lack clarity and are not linked to the success of their students.
- School leaders have failed to improve the quality of teaching. The additional training provided by the school has helped a small number of teachers. However, this has not been substantial enough to make significant improvements to the overall quality of teaching in the school.
- School leaders believe that many teachers are more effective than the progress of their students would suggest. The school's lesson observation system is complex and places too much emphasis on what teachers do rather than on the impact of teaching on learning.
- The pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funds are used to provide additional support for those who need it. The teacher working with the students in this area has recently been drawn back into mainstream teaching. There is little evidence that the use of the funding is having an impact. Pupil premium spending has not been effective.
- Managers pay regular half-termly visits to those students who are in off-site provision. The quality of provision is checked and the possibility of a return to mainstream schooling is reviewed.
- The school curriculum emphasises traditional academic subjects but this is undermined by a lack of specialist teachers. Some students and parents are concerned that the curriculum lacks practical or vocational components. This is a particular concern for those who wish to pursue careers in land-based subjects as these are among the largest employers in the area. Students receive adequate advice on their subject choice at Key Stage 4 but little careers advice.
- The school's provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effectively led and managed. Students routinely learn about important social and historical issues, for example by viewing and discussing such films as *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*. They have a good spiritual and religious awareness and the teaching of religious education is effective and often thought-provoking. For example, in one class an interesting discussion developed around mankind's stewardship of the natural world. Awards for citizenship recognise contributions to the community. Students engage in regular concerts, plays and musicals.
- By the end of the inspection, just under half of the parents who responded to Parent View had indicated that they would not recommend this school to a friend and felt that it was neither well led nor managed. However, this was not reflected in the views expressed by staff in their questionnaire. A significant number felt that the school had turned a corner and was beginning to improve. Many expressed confidence in the present senior managers and looked forward to the imminent arrival of the new Principal.
- IES has acted promptly to appoint a new Principal and other managers. However, their work has been ineffective in raising standards or improving teaching. While school leaders have begun to

tackle some of the weaknesses identified by inspectors it is too soon to see any improvement.

- Inspectors strongly recommend that the school should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

- The governance of the school:
 - Governance is inadequate. Governors have been too slow to recognise the school's weak performance. They have failed to ensure continuity of staffing and, as a result, many students have had frequent changes of teacher. Governors have accepted the accuracy of information given to them by senior leaders without proper scrutiny; their questioning of school leaders about performance has been inquisitive rather than challenging. Where governors have challenged the leadership on areas of weakness, they have not set clear targets for improvement.
 - Governors have not effectively monitored progress towards the school's targets. In common with other leaders in the school, the governors have an over-generous view of the effectiveness of teaching and have not ensured that the school has implemented a rigorous system to manage teachers' performance.
 - Governors are able to indicate how the pupil premium is spent, but not whether that spending is effective, or whether it is achieving value for money. They have failed to ensure that the school meets requirements for safeguarding students.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	138250
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	425167

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

Type of school	Academy free school
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	308
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kate Curtis
Principal	Peter Fyles (acting Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
Telephone number	01842 819501
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Email address	office@breckland.iesschools.co.uk

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