

# Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: The Gateway Academy

Marshfoot Road, Grays, Essex RM16 4LU

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Inspection dates:

10 and 11 December 2024

## Outcome

The Gateway Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The principal of this school is Grainne McLaughlin. This school is part of the Gateway Learning Community, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Viki Reid, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Lynda Pritchard.

## What is it like to attend this school?

There is a palpable sense of community at the Gateway Academy. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, thrive in their well-being due to the ethos of kindness. Pupils and families praise the wide-ranging support. For instance, there are well-attended learning activities before and after the school day. Pupils are safe and happy at the school. This also helps them have high attendance.

Behaviour is excellent. Classrooms are purposeful. Pupils work hard and are eager to learn. Throughout the day, they are orderly and polite. Pupils help to build this positive culture. For example, anti-bullying ambassadors are instrumental in resolving any unkind behaviour.

Pupils benefit from high expectations for learning. This is in all subjects, but especially in English and mathematics pupils are highly successful. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do really well.

Pupils live and breathe the school's values. They demonstrate aspiration and responsibility through the many leadership roles. For example, pupils present the regular video news bulletin confidently. Pupils engage frequently with the wider community, such as sitting on the board of the borough council. They learn compassion, for instance when they help the school provide Christmas presents for others who might not get them.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The school has established a strong curriculum. This identifies what pupils need to know to be successful. Teachers deliver the curriculum with considerable consistency. They routinely apply the school's 'signature strategies'. An example of this is the clear explanation and repetition of new vocabulary. This means pupils learn and achieve well. While this is the case, the school sometimes uses activities that do not help pupils learn the intended knowledge. For example, pupils sometimes carry out tasks without precise enough instructions. Where this happens, pupils do not make the progress through the curriculum they might otherwise achieve.

Teachers check learning thoroughly and effectively. They rectify where pupils have gaps in knowledge. Pupils build on secure foundations. In mathematics, this means pupils develop assurance with complex calculation. However, occasionally, the school does not help pupils make appropriate connections with prior and future learning. In a few areas, discussion in class moves on once facts are grasped rather than eliciting deeper understanding. In these instances, pupils' learning lacks the depth it could have.

The curriculum is ambitious. However, the proportion of pupils entered for the English Baccalaureate has been below average. The school is addressing this, and entries in these subjects have increased.

The school identifies pupils with SEND accurately and ensures that pupils receive support for their learning where it is needed. Pupils with SEND get the adaptations to learning they require to do well. The weakest readers get help to develop their fluency and comprehension rapidly. As a result, they access the curriculum with their peers.

The school has high standards for behaviour and attendance. Pupils understand and respond to these really well. The school is very effective at supporting needs that may underlie any misbehaviour. It works closely with families if pupils are absent. Consequently, pupils have high attendance and conduct themselves in an exemplary fashion.

There is a coherent programme for personal development. Through this, pupils develop strong knowledge of important issues. For example, they show mature understanding of homelessness and its causes.

Pupils receive high-quality careers education. The school gives them helpful and practical guidance. Pupils meet and learn from many providers and employers. The school is resourceful in asking former pupils to share their careers experience with current ones. Pupils have a lot of knowledge about their options, including those pupils with SEND. For example, pupils explain the advantages and otherwise of degree apprenticeships. Those pupils from all backgrounds develop a strong sense of aspiration for their next steps.

Trustees oversee provision closely. The trust and school leaders have built a culture in which staff flourish. Staff value and apply the professional development and support they receive. Staff retention is high. This leads to better provision for pupils.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

#### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In a few cases, learning activities do not help pupils to learn the intended knowledge as well as they might. This means that, in a few areas, pupils do not do as well as they could. The school should make sure that teachers know how to create and use activities that enable pupils to develop their learning with confidence.
- Teachers, on occasion, do not help pupils to make appropriate connections with prior and future learning. This means pupils sometimes struggle to discuss and apply their learning in depth and detail. The school needs to ensure that it gives teachers the guidance and support they need to be able to help pupils to build up a more connected web of knowledge.

## **Background**

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in March 2019.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	133114
<b>Local authority</b>	Thurrock
<b>Inspection number</b>	10345285
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,077
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Lynda Pritchard
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Viki Reid
<b>Principal</b>	Grainne McLaughlin
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.theglc-gatewayacademy.org.uk">www.theglc-gatewayacademy.org.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	27 and 28 March 2019 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school has been part of the Gateway Learning Community since January 2015.
- The school currently uses one alternative provision.
- 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.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the CEO and other trust leaders, the principal, other senior leaders, staff and pupils. As part of evaluating governance, the lead inspector met with the chairs of the trust, two other trustees and a governor.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents, including curriculum plans, school development plans, policies and documentation for behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and free-text comments submitted by parents during the inspection. Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's questionnaires for staff and pupils.

### **Inspection team**

Charlie Fordham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Elizabeth Shapland

Ofsted Inspector

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