

Brown's School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Brown's School is a day special school that admits a maximum of 40 boys and girls aged between 6 and 16 years. It is situated in Chelsfield in the Kent countryside. Initially established in 1997 to provide for pupils with dyslexia, in recent years the school has admitted pupils with a wider range of needs including speech and language difficulties, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and Asperger syndrome. There are 37 pupils on roll. There are 28 pupils who have statements of special educational needs and 27 are fully funded by their local authorities. One pupil is part-funded and other pupils are funded by their parents and carers.

In June 2011, following a visit by an Ofsted inspector, the Department for Education granted permission for the school to extend its provision to admit pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4. Plans to extend the accommodation are about to be submitted to the Department for Education for approval. In February 2012, there was a change of proprietorship to the current headteacher. As before, the school aims to 'provide a programme of lessons to alleviate literacy and numeracy difficulties; to promote enquiring minds and an eagerness to be involved in the world around them and to give the opportunity to develop successful learning strategies and acquire essential skills to last for a lifetime'. The school was previously inspected in March 2009, when it was judged to provide a good standard of education and all regulations were met.

Evaluation of the school

Brown's School continues to provide a good standard of education and welfare for its pupils. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, with increased confidence a key feature. Pupils, parents and carers are particularly positive about the quality of pastoral support provided by staff. Three regulations are not met. All requirements are met for safeguarding children and the procedures are thorough and are well understood.

Quality of education

A good curriculum and good teaching enable pupils to make good progress from their individual starting points. Good progress stems from frequent and systematic

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

opportunities for pupils to learn and practise strategies to improve their behaviour and learning. As a result, skills in reading, writing, spelling and mathematics improve well and confidence grows.

The curriculum is good because it is well organised and ensures good breadth, progression and balance that are entirely relevant to the pupils' needs, and the requirements specified in their statements. For example, literacy is separate from the curriculum for English, occurs daily, focuses on teaching reading and spelling and is organised by ability. Daily reading groups provide good, frequent opportunities to reinforce strategies learned to improve reading. Mathematics and physical education have an appropriately high profile each week. In addition to pupils' individual sessions, the provision for occupational therapy and speech and language therapy is an integral part of the curriculum. The skills and expertise of therapists are used well to plan and deliver these sessions, and work effectively develops pupils' social and emotional development.

Schemes of work, supported by mid-term plans, help teachers to plan for the specific needs and interest of their particular groups well. Curriculum policies give general guidance, but are often too general to explain the most important features of each subject in relation to the particular needs of the pupils. A wide range of relevant skills and knowledge for pupils' personal development are covered within personal, social and health education (PSHE). These include sex and relationship education and citizenship. However, this is an ambitious programme to cover in one PSHE lesson per week. Although these skills are reinforced in other lessons and activities, they are not always reflected in lesson planning to ensure that PSHE skills are systematically taught.

Parents and carers express concern about the lack of urgency with which the programme for secondary education has been established. A suitable programme has been implemented this academic year for Key Stage 3 and, in the short space of time since her appointment, the headteacher has established a well-thought-through curriculum for Key Stage 4 pupils so that they can take GCSE examination courses from September 2012. Arrangements are in place to provide careers education for all secondary-aged pupils, but this is currently not available.

Homework, linked to communication about how best they can support their children at home, is mentioned by parents and carers as an area of concern. There is a suitable policy for homework but its implementation is inconsistent recently, partly because of changes in staffing.

The quality of teaching is good overall because there is a high focus on learning that leads to pupils' good progress. Strengths lie in good behaviour management so that lessons generally proceed without interruption and even when disruption occurs it is addressed well and isolated to those individuals involved. Relationships between staff and pupils are good and activities often provide pupils with opportunities to work together in ways that they might find difficult, such as demonstrating how body shapes reflect one another in a mathematics lesson on symmetry. Similarly, in one of

the daily reading sessions pupils were supportive of one another and made good progress in reading the book aloud because of the structure of the session, high expectations and skilful support from staff, even when this was particularly challenging in relation to the pupils' skills and confidence. Staff are very clear about what pupils can do and plan lessons accordingly. Sometimes pupils are all provided with the same work and are not moved on quickly enough to the next level of skill or knowledge. In some lessons this is impeded by an over-reliance on worksheets.

Assessment is satisfactory. This is because procedures do not yet provide a clear picture of pupils' academic performance over time, across the full range of subjects or in improved behaviour. Assessments are not always detailed enough and are not brought together cohesively. However, frequent assessments of reading, spelling and mathematics are beginning to provide a picture that shows good progress over time. Teachers routinely talk to pupils about how well they are doing, but this is not always reflected sufficiently when they mark pupils' work for them to have a good record of how they achieved the learning and how to improve it.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good and this includes their behaviour. Some pupils express concern about the behaviour of others. It is the case that some pupils, particularly when they are new to the school, or have particular behavioural difficulties, find it hard to behave appropriately at times. However, and as confirmed by pupils and school records, incidents of inappropriate behaviour are limited to a minority and are well managed by staff in ways that help pupils feel safe and fairly treated.

Bullying does occur and those affected speak positively about how this is dealt with so that it does not re-occur. Pupils make good progress in managing their behaviour, in becoming confident young people and in developing positive attitudes to work and to one another. One way in which this is seen is in their enthusiasm, and cooperation in music and drama that leads to regular, popular performances. Such provision supports pupils' spiritual development effectively, as do the numerous educational trips. Educational trips also help pupils to appreciate, and have respect for, their own cultural heritage and that of others. After-school clubs are tailored to pupils' interests and transport arrangements, enabling most to participate at least once each week. A wide range of trips and visitors enable pupils to understand how they can play their part as citizens and make use of public services. Pupils' attendance is in line with national averages.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. Staff have a strong, shared commitment to promoting pupils' well-being. Procedures to safeguard pupils have high priority. For example, all staff, including the designated person for child protection, have been trained at the appropriate level to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities. Procedures to tackle bullying are similarly strong and are effectively

implemented. There is a strong commitment to staff training for pupils' particular learning and medical needs. The headteacher has undertaken a very precise appraisal to review health and safety procedures. Improvements already in place include a revised behaviour management system and additional site security. Plans are also firmly in place to sharpen up record keeping and pupils' individual plans for behaviour and education. Not all policies have been kept up to date with revised practice, such as the behaviour policy. Although appropriately implemented and meeting regulations, some policies are generic rather than specifically related to the circumstances of the school and its pupils. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

The new keyworker system is working well and addresses the recommendation from the previous inspection to ensure pupils had a key person to speak to. Pupils like having a member of staff especially assigned to them and the careful match of staff to pupils is helping to embed the system effectively. A short session has been added at the end of each day for pupils and keyworkers to look back at how well they have done during the day and to look forward to the next day. This is good use of curriculum time and provides a positive end to the day's proceedings, although some staff make better use of this time than others to discuss pupils' responsibilities, actions and progress.

The school works well with parents and carers to address any issues for pupils' well-being. There is a lot of contact with pupils' families, which helps to resolve anxieties as they arise and promotes a joint approach to their welfare. Pupils say that they feel safe and most say that they are encouraged to be healthy. The curriculum, including special days and events, supports these aspects of pupils' personal development effectively.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school carries out all of the required recruitment and staff vetting checks to ensure the suitability of staff and others to work with children. The checks are recorded as required in a single central record.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The premises provide suitable accommodation for teaching 40 pupils. The accommodation in the main block has recently been remodelled to rearrange staff facilities and to add a small teaching room and sensory room to complement the existing two classrooms and sports hall. A second block comprises two classrooms and a hall for music and drama. The third block is new since the previous inspection and provides two classrooms, a therapy room and a second medical room. As yet there is no provision for teaching practical science, although new plans for the building have this in hand. In the meantime, some science lessons take place at a local secondary school. Pupils use the local gym and swimming pool each week.

Provision of information

The school brochure has been revised recently and contains useful information for parents, carers and others. All of the required information is provided, or is made available, to parents and others. Suitable reports about pupils' attainment and progress are provided to parents and carers twice a year.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a suitable policy and procedure to address any complaints.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the quality of education provided (standards in part 1) and must:

- ensure that the curriculum policy is set out in writing and supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, and is implemented effectively (paragraph 2(1))
- provide appropriate careers guidance for pupils receiving secondary education (paragraph 2(2)(g)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

- improve the quality of the written policy to promote good behaviour amongst pupils which sets out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving, and ensure this policy is implemented effectively (paragraph 9).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- when revising policies for the curriculum and welfare, health and safety, ensure that they reflect the needs and priorities for the school's particular groups of pupils
- establish a more effective system to track and target the full range of pupils' academic and personal achievements over time.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special		
Date school opened	September 1997		
Age range of pupils	6–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 32	Girls: 5	Total: 37
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 25	Girls: 3	Total: 28
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	From £15,900		
Address of school	Cannock House Hawstead Lane Chelsfield Orpington Kent BR6 7PH		
Telephone number	01689 876816		
Email address	info@brownsschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Elaine Lovett		
Proprietor	Elaine Lovett		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



29 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brown's School, Orpington BR6 7PH

It was a pleasure to inspect your school and I write to let you know my judgements. First, let me thank you all for your help. The questionnaires, the conversations that we had and the work that I saw in lessons all helped me to make my judgements.

I judge that Brown's School provides you with a good education and nearly all government requirements are met. You are well cared for and make good progress in your time at the school. This helps you to become confident learners, overcome your difficulties and look forward to the future. I judged pupils' behaviour as good. Not all of you think that behaviour in school is good but given that some pupils have particular problems with their behaviour, I believe that they learn to improve their attitudes and relationships well, especially when they have been at the school for a while. You told me that you feel safe and confident that inappropriate behaviour is managed well by staff and I found this to be the case too.

As always, there are things that will improve the school for the future. So I have asked the headteacher and staff to track your progress more carefully and provide careers education and ensure that all curriculum and welfare policies reflect the needs and priorities of all pupils.

I know that you and your families are happy that the school will now provide education up to the age of 16. I wish you well in your future at Brown's.

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley
Her Majesty's Inspector