

Bracken Hill School

Chartwell Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG17 7HZ

Inspection dates

27–28 September 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The passionate staff team creates a school culture where pupils' needs are at the forefront of everyone's work. Pupils enjoy coming to school.
- This is an improving school. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are acting on the correct priorities for development. Pupils' education is getting better as a result.
- The new senior leadership team is improving the quality of teaching. As a result, pupils' achievements across all areas of their development are also improving. Disadvantaged pupils make as good progress as other pupils. Leaders have not yet ensured that there is a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics across the school.
- Pupils make good progress across a range of subjects. Pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics across all year groups. Systems to track pupils' progress across the full range of subjects are not yet effective enough.
- The early years provision is good. Children and their families are well supported on entry to the school. Children quickly start to develop their communication skills.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Bracken Hill School is a happy place where pupils feel valued and cared for.
- Teaching is good. In the main building classrooms are vibrant and displays support pupils' learning. On occasion, teachers do not use lesson time effectively to promote pupils' learning.
- Students make good progress in the sixth form. Students are well prepared for moving to college or to a training provider. Students benefit from gaining a wide range of accreditations and qualifications.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils make and maintain friendships. Pupils are polite to visitors to the school. The attendance of pupils is good.
- Pupils' safety is a high priority at the school. Staff recruitment and child protection arrangements are excellent.
- The governing body fulfils its duties effectively. It provides leaders with the necessary support to improve the quality of the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of high-quality teaching by ensuring that:
 - teachers use lesson time effectively to promote pupils' learning
 - the teaching of phonics strategies is consistent across the school
 - there are better systems in place to assess pupils' work in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a clear vision for the school and share a strong commitment to improving the work of the school. This vision is supported by senior leaders and governors.
- Since taking up their respective roles, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have increased the pace with which teaching is improving. Their combined understanding about the strengths and areas for development in the school enable them to make effective decisions about improvement.
- The systems for managing the performance of teachers and teaching assistants are effective. Targets related to whole-school initiatives and pupils' progress result in pupils receiving a good-quality education. There are excellent plans in place to improve this process even further this year.
- School leaders ensure that staff have access to opportunities to develop their professional skills and knowledge. For example, the rising number of pupils with a diagnosis of autism led to the development of individual sensory profiles. This ensures that a range of pupils' needs are met effectively.
- The curriculum provides pupils with numerous opportunities to learn about life in modern Britain. Pupils enjoy a range of community visits, including to places of religious interest. The school council ensures that their decisions are arrived at in a democratic way. For example, inspectors observed the school council discussing how they would find out their friends' views in deciding when an upcoming disco should take place.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively. This additional funding makes a positive difference for pupils across the school. Leaders ensure that eligible pupils make as much progress as other pupils.
- The development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning is at the heart of the school's work. Pupils are taught in an environment where they are exposed to excellent adult role models. As a result, pupils learn how to act appropriately in social situations. Displays around the school support pupils' cultural learning.
- The curriculum provides pupils with a rich experience of learning. Pupils have significant opportunities to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in English and mathematics. These lessons are complemented by a wide range of lessons focused around national curriculum subjects.
- The physical education and sport premium is used to fund a wide range of activities, such as archery and horse riding. Pupils make good progress with their physical abilities and learn about opportunities that they could take part in outside school.

Governance of the school

- Governors are passionate about the school and are deeply committed to improving it further. They recognise its many strengths, but also acknowledge that teaching needs to get even better.
- Governors receive useful information from school leaders about the work of the school. They maintain a strategic role and ensure that the school is financially stable.

- Governors, in conjunction with the headteacher, ensure that monies are well spent. They contribute to ensuring that spending has a demonstrable impact on the improving quality of pupils' education.
- The safeguarding of pupils is a key priority for the governing body. The nominated governor for safeguarding has been tenacious in conducting audits of pupils' safety and acting on these. As a result of this work, each room in the school has information about how the school keeps pupils safe. Staff are clear about the process for referring any concerns they have about a pupil or a colleague.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The safety of pupils is taken very seriously at Bracken Hill School. Senior leaders and governors ensure that staff recruitment and child protection arrangements are excellent. The new deputy headteacher has implemented even more rigorous systems for recording and checking how the school deals with concerns about pupils.
- Leaders and governors deploy appropriate staff to particular activities. Effective risk assessments are undertaken for off-site visits. Inspectors observed sufficient levels of staff supervision throughout the inspection.
- The management of pupils' medication is secure as there are clear procedures in place. These are well understood by staff. The school grounds are very well maintained and free from hazards. Classroom spaces, while busy, are designed to keep pupils safe.
- Leaders ensure that staff are well trained in the management of challenging behaviour. As a result of their training, the use of physical interventions to keep pupils safe is low.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is typically good. Although there is some high-quality teaching, there is also a small amount that needs to improve.
- Teachers use what they know about pupils' interests and needs to plan work that captures their imagination, providing purposeful learning experiences. They take into account the information provided in pupils' statements of special educational needs or in their education, health and care plans to personalise pupils' learning experiences.
- Where teaching and learning are at their best, pupils experience a positive climate for learning, where relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. This allows pupils to take risks with their learning and demonstrate a willingness to try new things. During one visit to a mathematics lesson, pupils showed great confidence in sharing their knowledge of number bonds with their friends.
- Staff plan a variety of interesting activities in lessons and make good use of resources to promote learning. A good example of this was seen in a science lesson where pupils were using a piece of equipment to show how their dirty hands could spread bacteria. Pupils demonstrated a high level of interest in the work and spoke about how they would wash their hands better in the future.
- Systems for tracking pupils' progress have greatly improved since the previous inspection. Teachers use this information well to plan effective lessons in English and mathematics. Good-quality assessment practice is also in place for science, computing

and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- Pupils are provided with effective support by a skilled team of teaching assistants. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to ensure that they provide pupils with encouragement and resources at the right time. Enthusiastic teaching assistants were observed to be supporting pupils with autism to participate in a lively group song. This enabled pupils to develop their communication skills effectively.
- There are good relationships between school staff and parents or carers. The home-learning initiative has enabled many pupils to make progress in key areas of their learning. Communication about pupils' learning and well-being between parents and school staff results in high-quality support for pupils in the classroom.
- Teachers use the space available to them well. Every part of the school building and grounds is used to promote learning. Inspectors observed teachers directing teaching assistants and pupils to work in different areas that allowed them the opportunity to concentrate better.
- Overall, pupils make good progress in a wide range of subjects. Occasionally, in some subjects, pupils' learning is not as effective because teachers' use of assessment information is not as good as it could be.
- The current quality of teaching across the school results in pupils making good progress with their English work. However, inconsistencies in the way in which phonics is taught means that pupils do not make even better progress.
- On occasion, teachers plan activities that do not sufficiently promote pupils' learning. Sometimes, teachers and teaching assistants spend too long explaining activities when pupils are ready to move on, which results in learning time not being used effectively.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The emotional well-being of pupils is a high priority for all staff. The strong relationships between pupils and members of staff result in pupils receiving good-quality support.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe online and in the community. The school has fabulous success in teaching pupils to use public transport. This has enabled pupils to develop their self-confidence and stay safe.
- The instances of bullying and racial harassment are exceptionally low. Pupils usually have very positive relationships with one another.
- The school environment is vibrant and there are many examples of pupils' work displayed around the school. Pupils enjoy seeing their work on the walls and are proud that it is there.
- Older pupils are provided with adequate careers education and guidance. Pupils are well informed about future opportunities because senior leaders have a good understanding of what local colleges and training providers offer. The school hosts a careers evening each year for parents and pupils to learn more about potential opportunities.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' conduct in lessons is very good. Inspectors

observed most pupils actively participating in all lessons. Most pupils displayed excellent attitudes to their learning.

- Staff consistently encourage pupils to display positive behaviours. Pupils move around the school sensibly and are quick to get to their lessons when they arrive at school in the morning.
- Pupils' behaviour in the dining hall is very good. Pupils enjoy a sociable time together while eating their lunch. Pupils of all ages demonstrate a good level of maturity during this part of the day.
- Pupils with complex learning difficulties respond well to the way in which adults apply behaviour management strategies consistently. Pupils make good progress in developing their communication skills and self-control. Teachers organise these teaching spaces to minimise distractions and promote learning.
- Pupils' attendance is good. Pupils told inspectors that they like coming to school. Leaders check that pupils who attend alternative provision arrive on time, are kept safe and behave well.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- School leaders carefully analyse information about pupils' progress. This information, when compared with information about some similar pupils, indicates that most pupils are making at least expected progress and sometimes better than expected progress in English and mathematics.
- Inspection evidence, which includes visits to lessons and looking at pupils' workbooks, indicates that pupils are making good progress in relation to their starting points. Older pupils were able to explain to inspectors how their previous work about using desktop computers was informing their work about laptops. These pupils used their previous learning to make further progress.
- Pupils who receive additional funding through the pupil premium make progress in English and mathematics equal to their classmates. The funding is used creatively to ensure that work is targeted at the right level for each pupil.
- Pupils achieve a wide range of external accreditations and qualifications at the end of key stage 4. These courses enable pupils' good progress to be celebrated. Many pupils are successful in gaining entry-level qualifications in English, mathematics, information and communication technology, science, art and design, and technology. Pupils also have many opportunities to have their wider skills, knowledge and understanding accredited in areas such as hospitality and catering, horticulture and sport.
- Pupils in key stage 1 achieve well in English and mathematics. During the last academic year, all pupils made the progress expected of them. The majority of pupils made better than expected progress in English.
- During the last academic year, pupils in key stage 2 achieved well across a range of subjects. Girls' achievement in this part of the school was particularly strong. This pattern was mirrored in key stage 3 where the majority of pupils made the progress expected of them.
- Although staff track pupils' progress in English, mathematics, science, computing, and spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, they have not fully developed the systems to track progress in other curriculum subjects. This means that teachers are not able to plan for the maximum amount of progress in all areas of the curriculum.

Early years provision

Good

- Children in the early years are taught alongside pupils in key stage 1. Children quickly make good progress as a result of teachers' accurate assessment of their needs. Home visits by school staff and the information provided by parents strongly supports children to make a good start to their education.
- Leaders and teachers have high expectations for children's progress in the early years. These high expectations result in clear planning for effective lessons. Staffing levels are appropriate and skilled adults enable children to form trusting relationships with the adults quickly. This enables children to make good progress in their learning and development.
- The learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, is well resourced with a wide range of fun and engaging activities. Staff organise a range of exciting activities that enable children to get involved and make their own choices in learning. The spaces are safe for children to access activities independently where necessary.
- Children are well prepared for the move to Year 1 because adults make sure that children in the early years have plenty of opportunities to be part of larger groups of pupils. Children behave well. Staff act as positive role models and they make learning exciting.
- The early years leader has a secure understanding of the statutory requirements for this age group. She has made effective links with similar schools and this is helping to improve the quality of early years provision even further.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Students in the sixth form benefit from an effective curriculum that prepares them well for life after school. As a result of this effective preparation, all students go on to further education, employment or training.
- Relevant work experience placements are arranged for sixth-form students. Students' needs and aspirations are taken into account in the planning of these activities. Students told inspectors that they enjoy these opportunities to learn about the world of work. They were able to talk with confidence about the skills they develop while working.
- Students continue to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in English and mathematics during their time in the sixth form. Many achieve functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics, which builds on their work in key stage 4.
- Students access a range of accreditations and qualifications which help them to get ready for their adult life. Many students make very good progress in travelling independently during their time in the sixth form. This work is complemented by accreditations in courses such as food, drink and cooking, and countryside skills and farming.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is good. Students act as effective role models for younger pupils. They participate in their lessons with enthusiasm and develop independent work skills.

- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and know their students well. They work well with teaching assistants to plan effective lessons. As a result of knowing the students well, they are able to challenge them at the right time, and this enables all students to make good progress.
- The sixth-form leader provides the department with effective leadership. She is passionate about providing a high-quality education for all students. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and sixth-form leader's vision is ambitious. This is building momentum and the department is improving its work.

School details

Unique reference number	122961
Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	10005510

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	130
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	26
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phil Lakin
Headteacher	Catherine Askham
Telephone number	01623 477 268
Website	www.brackenhill.notts.sch.uk
Email address	office@brackenhill.notts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 October 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The headteacher took up the post at the school in January 2016. The deputy headteacher joined the school in April 2016.
- Bracken Hill School caters for pupils who have a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are rising numbers of pupils with a diagnosis of autism.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.

- The school caters for pupils from 4–19 years of age. Until September 2016 the early years provision was not active due to there being no pupils of that age on the school's roll.
- The school uses Skills for Employment and the SPACE Learning Centre as alternative providers.
- The school has a separate building that is used by post-16 students.
- There are more boys than girls. Almost all pupils are from a White British background and speak English as their first language.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors made visits to all classes to observe teaching and learning in action. Most observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors held discussions with governors, the headteacher, senior leaders, parents, staff, a representative of the local authority and pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including governors' records of meetings, the school improvement plan, pupils' progress information, pupils' work and surveys of parents' views undertaken by leaders.
- The replies to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were not in sufficient number to provide inspectors with detailed information.

Inspection team

Phil Harrison, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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