

Branwood Preparatory School

Stafford Road, Monton, Eccles, Manchester, Lancashire M30 9HN

Inspection dates

13–15 June 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Together with her strengthened leadership team, the headteacher has ensured that the school has implemented the recommendations from the previous inspection.
- The headteacher is highly receptive and responsive to new ideas. She is in the process of refining school plans to clearly identify the school's strengths and areas for development.
- Pupils' attendance is good, their behaviour is impeccable. Pupils are highly studious and ambitious and have excellent relationships with each other and their teachers.
- The school's work to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and their appreciation of British values, are good.
- Pupils' achievement, particularly in Years 5 and 6, is outstanding in subjects such as mathematics, English and verbal reasoning.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' performance in subjects such as history and science are yet to be fully implemented.
- Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to encourage pupils to apply their excellent mathematical skills to practical problem-solving activities.
- Teachers are highly successful in preparing pupils with the skills they need to pass entrance examinations for the schools of their choice.
- Pupils benefit from a rich curriculum, with excellent opportunities to develop their musical, sporting and artistic skills.
- Governors and trustees are supportive of the school, but are yet to hold senior leaders fully to account for the school's performance.
- The leadership and management of the early years are good. All children make at least good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Trustees, governors and senior leaders, ensure that the independent school standards are met and that safeguarding meets requirements.
- The vast majority of parents say that their children are safe, happy and achieving well.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - ensuring that school plans, including the school’s self-evaluation, clearly identify the school’s strengths and what it needs to do to further improve
 - making sure that all governors and trustees challenge senior leaders and hold them fully accountable for all aspects of the school’s performance
 - refining systems for assessing pupils’ performance in subjects such as history and science, and in so doing, moving the quality of teaching, and outcome for pupils, from good to outstanding.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - providing greater opportunities for pupils to apply their considerable mathematical skills to practical problem-solving activities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Branwood is an exceptionally well-organised and well-respected school. The headteacher is responsive to new ideas and determined to do all she can to move the school from good to outstanding. Inspection evidence indicates that the headteacher is well on her way to achieving this goal.
- The school website states, 'In addition to striving for academic excellence, we also focus on creating a happy and caring environment for our pupils. We believe that only a happy child is able to achieve their very best, and we ensure that each child receives the attention that they deserve.'
- Senior leaders, teachers, governors and trustees work exceptionally well together to ensure that the school's aims are realised. Pupils attain academic excellence in several subjects. Those currently in Year 6 have all been successful in their applications to various selective schools. Pupils' good achievement is due to good teaching and the positive impact of the school's harmonious, caring and scholastic environment.
- Governors, trustees and senior leaders have a good understanding of the independent school standards and ensure that all are met.
- All staff are proud to be working at Branwood. They understand what the school aims to achieve and are fully supportive of senior leaders in their endeavours. Staff are of the view that leaders work hard to improve teaching. Teachers say that professional development opportunities support them well in improving their teaching practice.
- Pupils benefit from a wide-ranging curriculum which prepares them exceptionally well for grammar school entrance examinations. In addition, they study science, history, art and Spanish. Many opportunities are available for pupils to pursue their interests, and build on their skills and competencies, in music and sports. Pupils excel in sports such as cricket, tennis, football and basketball and hone their musicianship skills in playing various string, percussion, brass and woodwind instruments.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils learn about diverse cultures and have a good understanding of the major world faiths. Pupils raise money for different charities and have supported worthy causes in Gambia and Syria. These aspects of the curriculum help pupils understand what it means to be British and enhance their ability to empathise with those less fortunate than themselves.
- Pupils know how democracy works. They have elected council members, drawn up class charters, studied Victorian parliament and visited the crown court in Manchester.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school. Typically, those who spoke with inspectors, and sent in text responses during the inspection, said, 'This is a fantastic school with great teachers' and 'Branwood is one happy, strong family'. All parents are of the view that their children are progressing well. They say that communication is good and that their children are safe and well looked after.
- Senior leaders have been successful in developing an effective approach for assessing pupils' work, and giving them feedback on it. This is consistently implemented across the school.

- The headteacher is 'outward-facing' and does not work in a vacuum. The school works closely with local schools' consortia. In addition, it draws on the support of an external education specialist when necessary. Recently, trustees appointed a specialist consultant to support the headteacher in refining performance management systems.
- Senior leaders are committed to celebrating diversity, promoting equality and ensuring that the school meets its statutory responsibilities relating to the publication of information on its website.
- Since the previous inspection, refined systems for tracking pupils' performance in English and mathematics have been implemented. Coordinators in these subjects collect and analyse information on the performance of all pupils. This enables senior leaders to put additional support in place where it is needed and tailor the curriculum to meet pupils' specific educational needs. Systems to monitor subjects such as history and science are yet to be fully implemented.
- Aspects of planning are still evolving. For example, school plans, including the school's self-evaluation, do not always clearly identify the school's strengths, or what it needs to do to further improve.

Governance

- Governance consists of a board of trustees and one of governors. Both bodies meet on a regular basis. Governors have a more precise knowledge of teaching and learning when compared to trustees, who focus on making decisions relating to finance and ensuring that the school's budget is healthy.
- Minutes of governors' and trustees' meetings show that the headteacher keeps members up to date on developments in school, including in relation to pupils' internal examination results. Board members are also informed of Year 5 and 6 pupils' grammar school offers and chosen destinations.
- The chair of governors regularly comes into school to attend staff meetings. Most members attend a variety of functions and events at school, including summer and Christmas fairs, shows and carol services. However, not all board members have a detailed knowledge of life in Branwood, or are fully aware of the priorities of the headteacher.
- The headteacher is aware that sharper self-evaluation, and comprehensive performance management procedures, will enhance board members' understanding of school priorities and enable them to better challenge senior leaders and hold them more closely to account.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The bursar ensures that the school's single central record is well organised, compliant with statutory requirements, and up to date. All members of staff have undergone rigorous checks to ensure their suitability to work with children.
- The school carries out regular detailed risk assessments. These cover all aspects of building safety, as well as the many school trips and educational visits from which pupils benefit.

- The school works with various specialist partners, including from children's and local authority services, and has rigorous systems in place to ensure that pupils are safe at all times. The school safeguarding policy is current. It is published on the school's website and made available to parents.
- All members of staff are trained well and know exactly what to do should they have a concern about the welfare of a pupil. Specialist training for designated safeguarding is of a very high standard. In addition, staff have been trained in, and are familiar with, the government's 'Prevent' duty to protect pupils from extremism and radicalisation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is good and has been maintained since the previous inspection. In several subjects, including mathematics and English in some year groups, teaching is outstanding. In all subjects, the quality of feedback to pupils on their work is now good, and this has helped to develop pupils' understanding of what they need to do to take the next steps in their learning.
- Teachers skilfully question pupils and encourage them to think deeply about their learning. This was demonstrated in an upper key stage 2 class, where pupils were exploring the motivations of various characters in act three of Macbeth. Pupils read various scenes with excellent expression and demonstrated a good understanding of the play's plot. The teacher probed pupils' understanding further by asking them to think about irony and envy in the play and consider the meaning of phrases such as 'fruitless crown'.
- Pupils' books reveal excellent examples of thoughtful and well-written extended essays, poetry, letters and factual accounts of their many educational visits. Work in all subjects is carefully presented and regularly assessed in line with the school's assessment and feedback policy.
- Teachers set pupils complex and challenging tasks in mathematics. This was shown in an upper key stage 2 class where, in preparation for their forthcoming internal assessments, pupils were revising and enhancing their skills in working out multiplications of mixed fractions. Pupils who spoke with the inspector said that they are confident in their mathematics work because they can always find the answer to a calculation by referring to their method books.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and use their good subject knowledge well to extend pupils' learning. This was shown in a key stage 1 class where pupils were encouraged to demonstrate their well-developed writing skills, and good use of grammar, in sentences such as, 'Gran was making some delicious gingerbread, with a variety of ingredients.'
- Teachers ensure that pupils listen carefully to instructions, work together cooperatively and try their best. This was illustrated in a key stage 1 music lesson, where pupils were creating their own compositions, a recorder performance of the 'EBGBs' song, and in various one-to-one music tuition sessions.
- Verbal reasoning, spelling, grammar and punctuation are taught exceptionally well, as demonstrated by the excellent outcomes for pupils in these subject areas.
- During the inspection, observations were made of pupils engaged in problem-solving activities. This was the case in a lower key stage 2 class, where pupils solved decimal

addition, subtraction and multiplication word problems. However, work in pupils' books reveals that opportunities are sometimes missed for them to apply their exceptionally well-developed mathematical skills to problem-solving activities.

- Across both key stages 1 and 2, teachers focus on developing pupils' confidence, this includes for the most able pupils, many of whom achieve exceptional academic standards.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils are self-assured and confident learners. They are eager to share their ideas, enjoy contributing in class and regularly engage in independent research activities.
- Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel well cared for and safe at all times. Pupils are confident to talk to any member of staff if they have a concern or worry. They know that they will always be taken seriously.
- Dedicated support from the special educational needs coordinator helps to curb any anxieties and/or pressures that pupils may face. Most pupils are resilient and well equipped to manage, and live up to, the high expectations that teachers have of them.
- Pupils are adamant that there is rarely, if ever, any bullying at school. They know exactly what bullying is and say that any 'fall-outs' are short-lived, as pupils are keen to 'make up' and become friends again.
- Pupils respect each other's differences. Older pupils have an especially well-developed understanding of racism and homophobic bullying, none of which, they say, ever take place at school.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe when online. They know never to 'click on links', download materials from unknown sources or share personal information over the internet. Pupils know not to play inappropriate online games or visit chat rooms.
- Pupils understand the importance of regular exercise, dental care and healthy eating and how these contribute to their well-being and success at school.
- Many visitors from the police, fire, children's and rescue services, help pupils to understand safe and unsafe situations, dangers and risks.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' manners are impeccable. They enjoy welcoming visitors into the school and are polite and courteous. Pupils are passionate about their learning and thoroughly enjoy coming to school, as shown by their good attendance and punctuality.
- Pupils wear their school uniform smartly and with pride. They are highly appreciative of their generous school grounds, which they ensure are always neat, tidy and well taken care of.
- Pupils behave sensibly and maturely at all times. They move around the school

considerately, ensure that lunch and breaktimes are orderly and relish participating in a wide-range of extra-curricular academic and sporting activities. Pupils regularly come together for assemblies, drama practice and celebration events, where they show their discipline, determination to succeed and joy at being part of a diverse and harmonious community.

- Pupils enjoy singing. This was evident during a music assembly, where pupils demonstrated their positive attitude to learning, and their willingness to actively engage, as they sang 'It's Fabulous' with great enthusiasm and gusto.
- Pupils appreciate the many opportunities they have to demonstrate their caring nature and leadership skills. This they do as members of the school council, house captains, prefects, play-leaders, librarians and buddies. Such responsibilities prepare pupils well for the next stage of their learning after they leave Branwood School.
- Pupils raise funds for many different charities. They are creative and inventive. During the inspection pupils were planning a 'doughnuts for dads day', to both celebrate Father's Day and generate income for worthy causes.
- There are few incidents of poor behaviour recorded in the school's behaviour logs. Staff, governors and trustees are of the view that pupils' behaviour is impeccable, as are most parents who spoke to inspectors and completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Inspectors agree with this consensus. All evidence indicates that behaviour is typically outstanding over time.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good, and sometimes outstanding progress, and attain highly in a wide range of subjects. Evidence of pupils' rapid and sustained progress can be found in their work books in subjects including English, mathematics, music and physical education. Pupils' elevated levels of attainment are shown through the consistently high scores they obtain in ongoing internal assessments. Pupils' achievement in subjects such as history and science is good rather than outstanding. In addition, in some year groups pupils do not always achieve to their absolute best.
- By the time pupils left school at the end of Year 6 in 2016, their attainment in reading, writing, mathematics and verbal reasoning was outstanding. This year, every pupil has been successful in securing a place at a school of their choice. Almost all pupils had a choice of up to four grammar schools.
- Teachers' assessments in English, across the school, show that the vast majority of pupils are making at least good progress to attain 'core' (expected) standards. A large group has attained 'upper' (better than expected) standards. Few are at the 'lower' (less than expected) standard. Any pupils working below expectations are well supported and soon catch up to their peers.
- Assessments carried out in November 2016 show that pupils attain highly in various aspects of English, including spelling, comprehension and grammar.
- Pupils' attainment in reading is outstanding. For example, by the end of Year 2, pupils attain an average reading age of 10.5 years. In Year 4, it is 13.8 years, and in Year 6, 14 years. Pupils' spelling scores are also outstanding.

- Pupils are avid readers. Those who read for inspectors were familiar with the work of a wide range of authors and enjoyed texts in several different genres. Pupils' diction, intonation and comprehension skills are exceptionally well developed, particularly in Years 5 and 6.
- The school's own assessment information indicates that in mathematics, almost all pupils have attained expected standards in all year groups. In line with the school's high ambitions, a sizeable group of pupils have already acquired the competencies and skills necessary to reach better than expected standards.
- Assessments carried out in November 2016 show that most pupils attain highly in all aspects of mathematics, which the school describes as 'mechanical', 'mental' and 'problems'. However, assessment information shows that in some year groups, problem-solving is not as strong as other areas of mathematics. This is also evident in pupils' workbooks.
- Almost all pupils with English as an additional language have good speaking, listening, grammar, punctuation and spelling skills. Good support is available for the small minority of these pupils in need of extra help to catch up to their peers.
- Additional support is available for a small group of pupils who have special educational needs. The additional needs of such pupils are minor and do not prevent them from successfully completing grammar school entrance examinations.
- Pupils' verbal and non-verbal reasoning skills are exceptionally well developed, as evidenced in the school's assessment information and pupils' success at passing grammar school entry tests.
- Assessment information for physical education indicates that in sports such as dodgeball and basketball, all pupils are reaching at least expected standards in acquiring social, physical, tactical and technical sporting skills.
- The most able pupils make exceptional progress because they are consistently challenged in their learning and teachers expect great things of them. The majority of teachers provide such pupils with supplementary learning activities in class, encourage them to research areas of interest and give them additional homework.
- In some subjects, including history and science, assessments are not as comprehensive as in English and mathematics, and neither is pupils' progress as good. Senior leaders are in the process of further developing and refining assessment procedures for these subjects to help to move outcomes to outstanding in all subjects.

Early years provision

Good

- All aspects of the leadership and management of the early years provision, including the quality of teaching, are good. Staff have high expectations of children and form secure, nurturing attachments with them.
- Children enter the Nursery class with skills and abilities at least in line with those expected for their age. Information held by the school indicates that children's language and literacy skills are particularly well developed.
- Children make good progress in all areas of learning, including reading, writing and mathematics, in both the Nursery and Reception classes. In 2016, all children, eight in

total, attained a good level of development. Most girls exceeded the early learning goals. Children were exceptionally well prepared for their learning in Year 1.

- Currently, there are no significant gaps between the performance of boys and girls, children from minority ethnic groups or children who speak English as an additional language. No children are eligible for free school meals or additional funding.
- Children's learning journeys (workbooks), and assessment information, show that they make good, and in some cases outstanding, progress from their starting points on entry to the Nursery class.
- Children are highly cooperative. They have excellent skills in making relationships, working together and sharing resources. Children have a good understanding of people and communities and enjoy learning about the world around them.
- The layout and organisation of the Reception class, and the separate building for the Nursery class, are clearly linked to the different areas of learning. Children have many opportunities to read, from the wide selection of books available to them, engage in role-play and hone their artistic and creative skills.
- Children behave sensibly and safely at all times. They listen carefully and follow instructions closely. This was evident during a physical education lesson, where children jumped between the rungs of a 'flat ladder', meandered in and out of cones, exercised and engaged in various team-work activities.
- Outdoor provision has improved considerably since the previous inspection, to enhance children's learning. Both the Nursery and Reception outdoor areas now have covered play spaces and soft-surface floor covering. Areas are well resourced and thoroughly enjoyed by children.
- Teaching in the Reception class is effective. This was evident during an activity in which children showed their familiarity with the school's phonics routine, as they confidently sounded out words such as 'butter', and wrote various '-er words', such as 'paper' and 'water'.
- All parents who spoke with inspectors, and completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, are happy with their children's progress in the early years. They are appreciative of the school's 'open door' policy and the many opportunities they have to engage with their children's learning, including through regular homework.
- The same stringent safeguarding procedures in operation in key stages 1 and 2 are applied to the Nursery and Reception classes.

School details

Unique reference number	105991
DfE registration number	355/6004
Inspection number	10034021

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

Type of school	Independent preparatory school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	155
Proprietor	Branwood School Trust Limited
Chair of Governors	Joanne Wilcox
Headteacher	Catherine Follett
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,005
Telephone number	0161 789 1054
Website	www.branwoodschool.co.uk
Email address	mail@branwoodschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	1–3 July 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets statutory requirements for the publication of information on its website.
- Branwood Preparatory School is a coeducational school that caters for pupils aged from 3 to 11 years. Full-time early years provision is available for children in the school's Nursery and Reception classes.
- Branwood School opened in 1928. Situated in a spacious two-acre site in Monton, the school aims to 'provide the perfect environment and the teaching and learning necessary for every child to become a successful independent learner and well-rounded individual'
- Branwood School is culturally diverse and caters for pupils from a wide range of cultural and religious backgrounds. A small minority of pupils have special educational needs and receive additional support. The school caters for a small number of pupils who speak

English as an additional language.

- Pupils do not participate in national key stage 1 or 2 standard assessment tests (SATs) or in the national phonics screening check. The school carries out regular internal assessments, focusing mainly on English, mathematics, verbal and non-verbal reasoning.
- The school provides a breakfast club, an after-school service and a wide range of after-school clubs, all of which are managed by governors and trustees.
- Various staff have left the school since the previous inspection, including the deputy headteacher (former headteacher), five teachers and three teaching assistants. A new headteacher has taken up post, as have six teachers, one with a special educational needs coordinator role. Other recent staff include an early years coordinator and bursar.
- Structural changes since the previous inspection include outdoor canopy-covered areas for the early years and key stage 1, extended 'soft-play' areas, an outdoor learning classroom and reading area, Nursery playground and garden, artificial grass areas, wooden trail and new security fencing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils in various lessons, including English, mathematics, music and physical education.
- Pupils' work was scrutinised during lessons and separately. Meetings were held with the headteacher and various staff, including the coordinators for English, mathematics, the early years and special education needs.
- A meeting took place with the chair of the board of trustees and a parent governor. A telephone conversation took place with a governor.
- Inspectors considered 50 responses to the online survey, Parent View, as well as 37 text responses. Inspectors met informally with parents at the start of the school day.
- Responses to the inspection questionnaires completed by 23 members of staff were also considered.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and held discussions with pupils from across the school.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents. These included various safety and safeguarding policies and procedures, records of pupils' attendance, the school's reviews of its own performance and information on pupils' achievement

Inspection team

Lenford White, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

John Shutt

Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Parent View

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2017