

Brown's School

Hawstead Lane, Chelsfield, Orpington, Kent BR6 7PH

Inspection dates

11–13 July 2017

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The proprietor has not ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards. As a result, leadership and management are inadequate.
- The school is not compliant with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 because the arrangements for fire safety are not fit for purpose. Pupils' safety is compromised because the premises are unsafe.
- The school has no centralised fire alarm system and no emergency call points. An external risk assessment undertaken during the inspection confirmed that fire signage, fire doors, a fire exit and logbooks are all not compliant.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are inadequate. Leaders have not assessed the risks relating to fire safety thoroughly enough.
- Arrangements for governance are in the very early stages of development. It is too early to consider their impact.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' outcomes require improvement. Leaders do not know how much progress pupils have made from their starting points in all subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- Apart from fire safety, the school's work to keep pupils safe from harm is effective. Pupils enjoy coming to school, feel safe and are well cared for. Bullying is exceptionally rare.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They attend well, work hard and are enthusiastic about their learning.
- The clear majority of parents would recommend the school to others.
- Staff are overwhelmingly committed to their school. They are a united team that cares deeply about the pupils, while also having high expectations of what they can achieve.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. Pupils engage in a range of community activities, and learn about life in modern Britain as a matter of course.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management and pupils' welfare by ensuring that:
 - all the independent school standards are met
 - an urgent review of fire safety is undertaken and changes made to ensure that the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 is fully complied with
 - the proprietor receives challenge and support from the new governing body to help improve the school rapidly.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' outcomes by:
 - implementing a consistent assessment system that tracks pupils' progress in all subjects from their various starting points in order to provide accurate and reliable information that can then inform teaching.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- Ensure that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly in all subjects, and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress (paragraph 3, 3(g)).
- Ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school (paragraph 7, 7(a)).
- Ensure that the relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the effective implementation of a written health and safety policy (paragraph 11).
- Ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (paragraph 12).
- Ensure that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by ensuring that a written risk assessment policy is effectively implemented and that risk assessments are specific and that appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified (paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)).
- Ensure that showers are provided for pupils aged 11 years or over (paragraph 23(1), 23(1)(c)).
- Ensure that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured (paragraph 25).
- Ensure that the proprietor and persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently, they fulfil their responsibilities effectively and actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate because leaders have not ensured that the school meets all of the independent school standards.
- The proprietor, who is also the school's headteacher, has not ensured that the school is compliant with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The arrangements for fire safety are inadequate. Two external consultants visited the school during the course of the inspection. Both confirmed that the arrangements for fire safety do not meet legal requirements. The school has no centralised fire alarm system, no emergency call points and, until the final day of the inspection, no formal fire risk assessment completed by a fire safety professional in place. The risk assessment completed during the inspection confirmed many areas of non-compliance, including in relation to signage, fire doors, fire exits, fire alarms and logs of checks.
- The school is well staffed and resourced. The staff team is positive, energetic and determined. Therapists, teachers and learning support assistants work together effectively. Pupils spoke positively about those who support them to learn. They also said how helpful they found the speech and language and occupational therapies, as well as the specialist literacy support, available to them.
- The overwhelming majority of parents are positive about their children's experiences of the school. They say that one of the many strengths of the school is the staff's ability to truly understand pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities. Comments from parents include 'Brown's is a very special school that has changed our son's life', 'Even family and friends have noticed the difference in my daughter's social skills since she attended Brown's', 'This school has changed our son's life, not just his education.'
- The curriculum is well designed to meet the needs of pupils. It is effectively planned and personalised. Pupils in key stages 2 and 3 access the full national curriculum, while pupils in key stage 4 have a number of options, including qualifications in mechanics, food technology, physical education, art and design, and computing. The quality of careers education for secondary-aged pupils is adequate, impartial and developing further under new leadership.
- A range of extra-curricular activities enhance the curriculum. In addition to residential visits abroad, such as to Paris, pupils recently engaged in 'community day', during which they helped wash cars, collected litter and socialised with members of the school's local community. Pupils also bake cakes for the local homeless community every week, support each other as peer mentors and represent their classes through a democratically elected school council. These activities have a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils also access various therapies including reading with Lottie, the school's therapy dog, support various charities and engage in a national youth leadership programme.
- The school's commitment to teaching pupils about the protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act, and to preparing pupils for life in modern Britain, is strong. It is exemplified by the fact that lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils are confident enough to talk about their sexuality in front of their peers. The school's inclusive approach means that

bullying is very rare, but dealt with effectively when it arises.

- The monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is adequate. A programme of formal termly visits to classrooms and checks on planning, workbooks and outcomes is well received by teachers. The information collected is used to assess the quality of work in the school. It is linked to the school's system for managing staff performance.
- This inspection included a formal commission from the Department for Education to consider the school's application to increase its number on roll to 70 and to extend its age range from 6 to 18. The premises can comfortably accommodate up to 70 pupils and the school has appropriately prepared the curriculum to meet the needs of students aged 16 to 18. However, in the light of this inspection's findings, the requested material change is not recommended at this time.

Governance of the school

- Governance is new and evolving. A new chair of the governing body was appointed very recently. The terms of reference for the governing body are being reviewed in time for the next academic year.
- Until now, the proprietor governed the school. The lack of external support and challenge has meant that leaders have not kept fully abreast of changes in legislation and improvements in practice since the last full standard inspection.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective because of shortcomings in fire safety.
- However, the school's systems to ensure pupils' safety are understood by all staff. A safeguarding culture of 'write it down' is inherent, and concerns are well documented and referred on to external agencies as appropriate.
- All relevant staff training, including in first aid and fire safety and for the members of designated staff who lead on safeguarding, is up to date. Where specific training needs have arisen, for example in relation to online safety or the 'Prevent' duty, the school has organised additional training. Leaders remind staff of their safeguarding responsibilities and check their understanding during Monday meetings.
- The school's safeguarding policy reflects the most recent statutory guidance, 'Keeping children safe in education' (September 2016). The school's website publishes the policy alongside all other required policies and information. The school's policy and actions on the use of physical intervention are also effective.
- The inspector's conversations with the local authority's designated officer (LADO) confirmed that the school's safeguarding leaders work in partnership with other professionals and investigate concerns thoroughly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment typically enables pupils to engage or re-engage with learning, often following unsuccessful placements in previous schools. However, it requires improvement because assessments of pupils' work only take place in English and mathematics, and even these assessments are sometimes unreliable. As a result, teachers in all subject areas do not have a tangible understanding of pupils' starting points in order to effectively plan for them to make good or better progress.
- Pupils are not always aware of what they need to do to achieve at the level of which they are capable. The new evidence-based assessment system is likely to provide greater clarity for pupils and teachers as to their starting points, targets and progress. The implementation of the system is due in September 2017.
- Teachers successfully combine care and nurture with high expectations of pupils. Teachers' detailed and thoughtful planning ensures that pupils are engaged in learning and develop the confidence to contribute to discussion and ask questions.
- Pupils' reading skills are well developed. This is partly due to effective daily reading sessions across the school, which include a range of rotational activities such as independent reading, educational games on tablet computers, literacy board games and shared reading of newspapers.
- Very positive working relationships between teachers and learning support assistants enable pupils to feel able to seek advice and guidance when they need it. The deployment of learning support assistants is effective. They are well trained to support pupils' learning. Levels of staff supervision are high, providing pupils with an appropriate amount of support.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate. This is because of the risks presented to their safety as a result of weak fire safety arrangements.
- Pupils say they feel safe. They know that staff are always available to support them. All pupils have a chosen key person they trust – their 'listening ear'.
- Bullying is very rare and dealt with rapidly when it arises.
- Pupils know how to stay safe, including online.
- The school monitors pupils' personal development anecdotally, in case studies, and using their 'non-academic profile tracker', which shows that they make satisfactory social and emotional progress, overall. Leaders are rightly developing a more robust and consistent system. This is intended to record the specific elements of progress in pupils' personal improvement, especially in relation to social and emotional development, for implementation in September 2017.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders track the few incidents of serious misbehaviour carefully. Staff are clear about pupils' specific 'triggers' and tailor teaching and social activities accordingly. Pupils enjoy the rewards received for kindness and positive behaviour, such as the 'Brown's bonus lunch' observed during the inspection.
- Incidents of challenging behaviour are dealt with safely and effectively. The rare use of physical intervention is documented accurately and monitored closely.
- Attendance and punctuality are good. The vast majority of pupils attend very well. In a very small minority of cases where attendance is not frequent enough, pupils and their parents are effectively supported to improve.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The progress pupils make from their different starting points is unclear and anecdotal in subjects other than English and mathematics. Assessments when pupils start at the school are sometimes unreliable. Therefore, the school is unable to provide consistent, accurate information about pupils' outcomes. The school does not review pupils' outcomes on a whole-school basis, nor does it consider particular groups.
- Information on pupils' outcomes is limited, making it difficult to assess how much progress they are making. Where this information exists, for example in mathematics, the information suggests that pupils are making good progress.
- Pupils' reading skills are well developed. This is particularly as a result of effective phonics teaching and a consistent approach to the daily teaching of reading, which is well resourced and organised. The information the school records on the improvement of reading ages shows that this work is having a positive impact.
- Older pupils experience success and achieve good outcomes at GCSE and in a range of vocational qualifications. However, as the school has not identified credible starting points for pupils, it is not known as to whether these outcomes reflect good or better progress.
- Pupils evidently make significant progress socially, emotionally and personally. Staff do not record this progress in the 'non-academic profile tracker' which suggests pupils only make satisfactory progress, on average.

School details

Unique reference number	131395
DfE registration number	305/6078
Inspection number	10008598

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	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	6 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	55
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Elaine Lovett
Chair	Sue Ponulak
Headteacher	Elaine Lovett
Annual fees (day pupils)	£25,000
Telephone number	01689 876 816
Website	www.brownsschool.co.uk
Email address	info@brownsschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 June 2012

Information about this school

- Brown's School is an independent special day school for pupils who have education, health and care plans related to their autistic spectrum condition and/or specific learning difficulties. Some pupils also have additional needs such as social, emotional and mental health difficulties and/or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. All pupils attend full time.
- Almost all pupils are placed and funded by a small number of local authorities.
- The school's last full standard inspection was in June 2012, when its overall effectiveness was judged to be good. An emergency inspection also took place in May 2013. It judged the school to be meeting the independent school standards that were checked.

- Additional farm workshops are made available to pupils at The Ravensbourne School, Hayes Lane, Bromley BR2 9EH on a weekly basis. The school makes no other use of off-site training or additional premises.
- The school's website meets the requirements of the independent school standards.

Information about this inspection

- This full standard inspection took place with one day's notice.
- The inspector jointly observed a range of teaching and learning with each of the deputy headteachers. He also heard pupils read, met with two groups of pupils, observed staff briefings, and spoke with staff and pupils informally throughout the inspection.
- The inspector scrutinised the school's information about pupils' progress and their attendance and behaviour.
- The inspector had several meetings including with the proprietor; leaders; all teaching, therapy and support staff and the new chair of the governing body.
- The inspector spoke with the LADO.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of documentation, including school policies, logs, evidence of staff training, and information related to safeguarding and health and safety.
- The inspection considered the 14 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. The inspector also took account of parents' views by considering the school's most recent internal survey, and considered two telephone calls made by parents to Ofsted directly.
- The inspector toured the premises and considered additional information and evidence in relation to the independent school standards.
- The inspector also met with two fire safety professionals – one who tested the school's smoke detectors and emergency lighting, and another who undertook a full fire risk assessment.
- The inspector also considered the school's application to make a material change to its registration, which proposed an increase in number to 70 pupils and to extend the age range to 6 to 18.

Inspection team

James Waite, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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