

# Broomhill Bank School

Broomhill Road, Rusthall, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN3 0TB

## Inspection dates

6–7 March 2018

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders have created a warm, nurturing culture in which pupils thrive. Their ambition for pupils to lead fulfilling, independent lives underpins everything the school does.
- Pupils, all of whom have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, make good academic, social and emotional progress as a result of a well-designed curriculum.
- Pupils develop good communication and interaction skills, both in lessons and in the extra-curricular activities that staff make available to them.
- Most teachers and support staff use probing questions and clear explanations to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- The most able pupils do not always receive the level of challenge that they need to make the progress of which they are capable.
- The differences between outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school are diminishing rapidly.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They talk with pride about their achievements and are ambitious for their own futures. Fixed-term exclusions have fallen sharply over the last two years.
- Pupils' attendance at the West site is strong and improving. There are more pupils at the North site who have a history of poor attendance and school refusal. Leaders work effectively with these pupils and their families to encourage regular attendance.
- Pupils are prepared well for their next steps and for life in modern Britain. They learn about democracy and the rule of law and know how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress because teaching is consistently strong and because they follow a curriculum that is well tailored to their needs.
- Governors are committed to the school and give their time and skills generously. They are taking effective action to secure the long-term future of the school.
- Leaders and governors monitor carefully the use of the pupil premium grant and funding aimed at those who need to catch up. They are rightly pleased that these pupils are doing well. However, leaders do not yet evaluate the impact of interventions sharply enough.

## Full report

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

- Improve pupils' progress in academic subjects, including that of disadvantaged pupils, the most able and those who need help to catch up, by:
  - eliminating any remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching
  - increasing the level of challenge for the most able pupils in the school
  - evaluating more sharply the impact of the pupil premium grant and the Year 7 literacy and numeracy premium.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Leaders have created an ambitious culture that has pupils' learning, safety and independence at its heart, encapsulated in the school's motto, 'Preparation for life'.
- Since 2015, the school has operated on two sites approximately 20 miles apart. Leaders, governors and staff have shown energy, resilience and considerable moral purpose in establishing the new 'arm' of the school. Leaders recognise that the journey has not always been a smooth one and that challenges remain. However, leaders and most staff believe that Broomhill Bank is now 'one school on two sites'.
- Subject leaders, and those responsible for various aspects of the school's work, receive the support and training they need to carry out their roles effectively. Leaders speak with considerable passion about their roles, and most are able to identify the impact of their actions. For example, leaders in the sixth form have broadened the curriculum significantly, while heads of department in English, mathematics, science and art have enabled pupils to achieve greater success in public examinations.
- Some subject leaders are new to their roles. They are not always able to evaluate the impact of their actions as clearly as more established leaders. They receive well-targeted support to help improve their skills in monitoring teaching and tracking pupils' progress.
- The school has not been immune to difficulties in recruiting staff, particularly in 'core' academic subjects such as mathematics and science. Leaders have responded positively by working with local providers of teacher training to bring in new teachers at the start of their careers. In addition, the school has a strong track record of supporting teaching assistants to train and qualify as teachers. Teaching and support staff said that they benefit from timely training that helps them to improve their skills and develop their careers.
- Staff enjoy working at the school, and display an unshakeable commitment to the well-being of the pupils in their care. Almost all those who responded to Ofsted's staff survey said that they are proud to work at the school. The majority of staff appreciate the efforts that leaders go to in order to support them in their work. However, a small number of staff indicated in their response to the survey that they would like to see greater clarity in leaders' roles across the two sites.
- Leaders have put in assessment arrangements that form a solid basis on which to plan pupils' next steps. Pupils' progress is discussed in weekly meetings, and teachers' assessment is complemented by regular testing. However, leaders are not complacent. They are currently piloting a new approach to assessment that helpfully brings together information about pupils' prior attainment and their social and emotional progress, and the targets from their education, health and care (EHC) plans. The early signs are that teachers are using this approach well to plan even more effectively to meet pupils' needs.
- Additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils, those in Year 7 who need to catch up and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is used carefully and effectively to remove barriers to learning. Leaders, teachers and therapists are extremely precise in

their analysis of the needs of each pupil and they leave no stone unturned to meet those needs. However, leaders are not yet as skilled in evaluating the impact of additional funds to provide governors with an overview of which interventions have been the most and least successful.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced. A much wider range of courses is available to pupils and students in key stages 4 and 5 than at the time of the previous inspection. For the first time, the school is offering a small number of level 3 courses. In key stage 3, pupils follow an appropriately modified national curriculum. A particularly effective aspect of the curriculum is the focus on communication and interaction. Recognising the need to provide greater levels of challenge to the most able pupils, leaders have begun to introduce streaming in English, mathematics and science.
- The curriculum is complemented well by a range of extra-curricular activities that give pupils opportunities to develop their interests and learn valuable skills. The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme is popular with pupils, and last year, for the first time, a number of pupils achieved the prestigious gold award. Pupils can also attend lunchtime and after-school clubs for sport and activities such as computing and chess. However, participation in clubs after school is relatively low because the majority of pupils rely on transport home by taxi.
- Pupils receive timely advice and guidance on their next steps. Leaders ensure that pupils have access to careers information from a range of sources. For example, on the second day of the inspection, 25 pupils from key stages 4 and 5 attended a local careers fair at which universities, colleges, apprenticeship providers and employers were represented.
- Leaders are keenly aware of their responsibilities in relation to equalities legislation. Pupils are taught to understand and respect the needs of other people and groups in lessons, in assemblies and in many subject areas. For example, a focus in many lessons is on helping pupils to develop empathy skills.
- Staff at the school provide a range of well-regarded outreach services to mainstream schools in the area. In addition, Broomhall Bank staff offer training in meeting the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities to colleagues in local schools.
- Parents and carers are largely positive about the work of the school. The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, believe that their children receive high-quality care and education. One parent wrote, 'I cannot praise Broomhill Bank enough for the marvellous work all the staff do.' However, a small number of parents expressed concern about communication with the school and about some aspects of the provision for their children.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors are committed to the success of the school. They have invested considerable time and energy into overseeing the development of the Broomhill North site. They have generously contributed their own professional skills when needed. They recognise that the school has reached an important moment in its history. They are taking effective action to secure the long-term financial sustainability of the school and to ensure that leadership and staffing arrangements are fit for purpose now that the

school has grown and operates over two sites. Governors work closely with the local authority, drawing on the advice and expertise of officers, including the school improvement partner, to support them in their work.

- Governors check the accuracy of senior leaders' reports by visiting the school to see for themselves the impact of their actions and by hearing from subject leaders in meetings. Governors monitor carefully how funding for disadvantaged pupils, those who have SEN and/or disabilities, and those in Year 7 who need extra help to catch up is spent. Governors challenge leaders on the impact of this funding. However, because leaders have not yet fully evaluated the impact of their actions in respect of this funding, governors do not have the information they need to ask probing questions.
- Governors take their own training and development seriously. Recent training in safeguarding has enabled governors to hold leaders to account more stringently for the safety of pupils. They also review the impact of their own work. They have recently set up a new committee focused on safeguarding to strengthen further their strategic oversight of child protection arrangements in the school.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils' welfare and well-being have a high priority in the school. Leaders have created a warm, nurturing climate in which pupils are safe. Leaders conscientiously seek to continually improve safeguarding arrangements, acting swiftly on any lessons learned. A parent who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, wrote, 'Her teacher is very caring, empathetic and will go the extra mile to help my daughter.'
- Arrangements for vetting the suitability of staff and volunteers are carried out diligently and accurately. All staff receive regular training on child protection, including on the 'Prevent' duty and on child sexual exploitation. Staff confirmed that they understand their safeguarding responsibilities. They are vigilant and know what to do if they are concerned about a pupil.
- Pupils said that they feel safe in school and that they know how to minimise risks to their safety, for example, when using the internet.
- The safeguarding governor makes regular checks on the work of staff and leaders in keeping pupils safe. The school's designated leaders for safeguarding have undertaken relevant, high-level training. They work on the basis that 'it could happen here'. They keep meticulous records of all child protection concerns. Leaders work closely with a range of external agencies and are diligent in following any safeguarding advice that they provide. Leaders act decisively to ensure that pupils who may be at risk of harm get timely help and support, following up tenaciously if there are any delays.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teachers are passionate about their work and ambitious for their pupils' achievement. They have high expectations of their pupils and set them stretching targets. The vast majority of pupils work hard in lessons and are resilient when tackling new material.

- Teachers' planning is effective in meeting pupils' needs. Teachers set interesting tasks that motivate pupils to do their best. For example, pupils in Year 9 were engrossed in a discussion about characters' feelings and emotions in 'Romeo and Juliet'. In their communication and interaction lessons, pupils learn how to give effective instructions and work as part of a group.
- Teachers make skilful use of questioning to challenge pupils' thinking and encourage them to explain their ideas. As a result, pupils are able to apply analytical and evaluative skills in a wide range of subjects. For example, Year 8 pupils were able to talk with insight about how companies use logos to influence consumers.
- Teachers have established effective routines for learning that enable pupils to settle quickly to their work. They build exceptionally strong relationships with their pupils, and are highly effective in reducing pupils' levels of anxiety. Pupils treat their teachers and each other with respect and listen courteously to their peers in class discussions.
- Most teachers provide high levels of challenge in lessons. In English, pupils study challenging books and write at length about them from Year 7 onwards. In mathematics, teachers provide pupils with opportunities to use and apply their skills to solve problems. In art, pupils concentrate hard when learning and applying new skills.
- The most able pupils relish the challenging work their teachers give them. For example, most-able pupils in Year 8 were able to write at length about literary texts they had studied. In a small number of cases, typically when subjects are taught by temporary or non-specialist teachers, teaching over time is less effective and most-able pupils in particular do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers are constantly on the alert for pupils' misconceptions, which they correct with timely and very precise verbal feedback. Pupils value this feedback and make effective use of it to improve their work. Teaching assistants and therapists are exceptionally well deployed and they play a vital role in supporting pupils' learning and emotional development.
- Teachers work closely with each other and with teachers from other local special schools to ensure that their assessment of pupils' progress is accurate. They provide parents with helpful and clear information about how well their children are doing and about their attitudes to learning.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils benefit from a range of opportunities to enrich their education and widen their experience. For example, pupils can participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme or take up new interests, such as horse riding, that might otherwise be out of their reach.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils learn about democracy and have the opportunity to elect representatives to the student council. They also learn about being responsible and caring citizens, for example by engaging in charity

fundraising events.

- By taking part in performances in school and locally, pupils gain self-confidence. Pupils understand and are tolerant of individuals and groups who are different from themselves. For example, pupils listened attentively and respectfully in an assembly about a school in Africa for which they will be raising money.
- Pupils' welfare and well-being have a very high priority in the school. The school provides highly effective support to vulnerable pupils and those who are anxious. Pupils know who to go to if they are worried. For example, one pupil said, 'I can chat about any problems or anything that is bothering me.'
- Pupils feel safe and know how to stay safe, including when using the internet. They know that bullying, including when it is carried out online, is wrong. Pupils said that bullying is rare but that teachers deal with it effectively when it does occur.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school site. They are polite to visitors and talk with pride about their school and their achievements. At lunchtimes, they enjoy conversation while eating with their friends and teachers.
- Pupils are punctual to lessons and display positive attitudes to their teachers and their studies. Pupils treat equipment and facilities with care, and inside and outside spaces are free from litter.
- A calm, orderly and often studious atmosphere permeates the school. Leaders and teachers have put in place clear boundaries that they enforce consistently and that pupils respect and understand. As a result, fixed-term exclusions at the North site have fallen sharply from above-national-average levels last year to just seven since September. Pupils said that, on the rare occasions when lessons are disrupted by inappropriate behaviour, teachers deal with it effectively.
- Attendance overall at the West site is improving towards the national average for secondary schools. Rates of absence are higher at the North site, but are falling. Leaders analyse attendance figures carefully, identifying trends and patterns. They communicate promptly with the families of pupils whose attendance drops below 95%.
- Leaders are aware that a small group of pupils with a history of poor attendance continue to miss too much school. Leaders are taking effective action to reverse this. As a result, the proportion of pupils who are frequently absent has reduced over the last year and continues to fall.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils enter the school with attainment well below that found nationally. In 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving at least grade 4 in English and mathematics was well below the national average, but represented an increase on the previous year's equivalent benchmark. In English, mathematics and science, many pupils made strong

progress from their very low starting points.

- Pupils' work shows that in all year groups and across a range of subjects, the majority of current pupils are making progress in line with, or above, their targets. Consequently, current pupils, in particular those in key stage 3, are making rapid progress in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Any differences between rates of progress for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities are diminishing rapidly.
- Most-able pupils make typically strong progress when they are taught by specialist or permanent teachers. However, where pupils' needs are less precisely met, leaders recognise that pupils, in particular the most able, do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- In English, pupils in most year groups are on track to meet or exceed their targets because the curriculum is more challenging than previously and the quality of teaching has improved. Pupils use spelling, grammar and punctuation accurately. Increasing numbers of pupils write at length in a variety of styles, for example exploring the techniques that writers use to gain their effects.
- In mathematics, the majority of pupils use and apply their mathematical skills with growing confidence, and so make rapid progress from their starting points. In science, most pupils achieve well because the work they do helps them to develop a secure understanding of scientific concepts as they move through the school.
- Pupils make very strong progress in art. They work with sustained concentration and use their knowledge of line, tone and texture to produce work of increasing maturity and technical skill.
- Leaders and teachers promote literacy well. Pupils enjoy reading. They read aloud fluently and can work out the meaning of words they do not recognise. Less confident readers are able to use their knowledge of phonics to sound out unfamiliar words. Many pupils enter the school with very low levels of literacy. They receive increasingly effective support.
- Almost without exception, pupils make very strong progress in the development of their communication and interaction skills, because teachers plan extremely well to meet pupils' needs. Teachers and other adults create a safe and caring environment in which pupils are able to learn about turn-taking, managing emotions and reducing anxiety.
- Pupils in the school are well prepared for their next steps in education. They receive timely information about next steps. Nearly all Year 11 pupils stay on until the sixth form to complete their GCSE courses.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

**Good**

- Leaders in the sixth form have a clear vision for a broad, balanced and engaging curriculum. Students are rightly entered for public examinations when they are ready, and so may take GCSE or BTEC examinations in Years 11, 12, 13 or 14. Consequently, retention rates are high and outcomes for students in the sixth form are good.



- Students do particularly well in the recently introduced vocational subjects, making strong progress from their starting points. For the first time, the school is able to offer level 3 courses, including in mathematics and art. Where appropriate, leaders make arrangements for pupils to take courses at local colleges, ensuring that all appropriate risk assessments are in place.
- Students also benefit from a stimulating extra-curricular programme. For example, this year a group of students achieved the gold award for their work in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. In addition, students are able to learn new skills in, for example, horse riding.
- Teaching in the sixth form is effective. Teachers ensure that students receive high levels of challenge. For example, students made rapid gains in their knowledge and understanding of the Second World War as a result of the teacher's skilful questions and clear explanations.
- Students behave well and their attendance is good. They are strong role models for younger pupils in the school. For example, at the time of the inspection, sixth-form prefects were organising a charity event to raise money for a school in Africa.
- Students receive high-quality support from their teachers, including for impartial careers education. For example, on the second day of the inspection, 25 students from Years 11 to 13 took part in a visit to a local careers fair. Most students have access to work-related learning or work experience while in the sixth form. Consequently, pupils are prepared well for their next steps.

## School details

Unique reference number	119026
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10045435

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	47
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Holder
Executive Headteacher	Emma Leitch
Telephone number	01892 510440
Website	<a href="http://www.broomhillbank.org.uk">www.broomhillbank.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:headteacher@broomhill-bank.kent.sch.uk">headteacher@broomhill-bank.kent.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	3–4 December 2013

## Information about this school

- The school does not meet all the requirements on the publication of information about the Year 7 literacy and numeracy premium and the pupil premium on its website.
- Since the previous inspection, Broomhill Bank Special School has expanded. Since September 2015, the school has operated on two sites. Broomhill Bank West is in Tunbridge Wells, and Broomhill Bank North is approximately 20 miles away in Hextable. There are now significantly more pupils attending the school than at the time of the last inspection.
- The North site contains residential accommodation for up to 16 pupils.

- The school caters for pupils who have EHC plans or statements for speech, language and communication needs and autistic spectrum disorder. All admissions to the school are coordinated by Kent local authority.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils for whom English is not believed to be their first language is much lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is higher than average.
- The school is commissioned by Kent local authority to provide a range of outreach services and training courses to local mainstream schools.
- A small number of sixth-form students access courses at local further education colleges.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 24 classes, in the majority of cases jointly with a member of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors also visited pupils during tutor time and attended part of an assembly. An inspector observed pupils at break and lunchtime and as they were dismissed at the end of the day.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders to talk about their areas of responsibility and the impact of their work.
- The lead inspector met with four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector also met with the local authority school improvement partner and spoke to the local authority designated officer on the telephone.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents by analysing 37 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, and 29 written responses. An inspector also met with a group of parents during the school day.
- The views of staff were taken into account by meeting groups of staff and by analysing 81 responses to the staff survey.
- Pupils’ views were considered by reviewing 28 responses to Ofsted’s pupil survey and by talking to a group of pupils.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked to them about their reading.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including the school’s self-evaluation, the school development plan and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Safeguarding procedures at the school were reviewed, including the checks made on staff and volunteers about their suitability to work with children.

## Inspection team

Gary Holden, lead inspector

Eileen Northey

Becky Greenhalgh

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. [www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

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