

# Inspection of outstanding school: Brookfields Special School

Sage Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire RG31 6SW

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Inspection dates:

11–12 September 2019

## **Outcome**

Brookfields Special School continues to be an outstanding school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Brookfields is a remarkably friendly and welcoming school. Staff are highly skilled. They know pupils exceptionally well. Staff understand pupils' needs precisely. Pupils told us that they really like their school and described it as 'the best'. They feel happy and safe here because they know that adults care about them.

Pupils behave superbly at this school. They listen carefully to their teachers and to each other. Classrooms are calm. Day-to-day routines are made easy to understand, so pupils know exactly what they need to do. Plenty of staff are on hand at breaktimes to help pupils play happily with each other. Pupils said they do not worry about bullying because they know they can tell an adult if they are concerned.

Pupils work hard and achieve extremely well at Brookfields. Teachers aim high for pupils. They ensure pupils get exactly the right help at the right time. By the time pupils leave the school, they are exceedingly well prepared for their adult life. Some pupils already have a job by the time they leave. Students in the sixth form told us that they feel excited about their future.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Brookfields still provides an outstanding quality of education. Leaders, staff and governors remain hugely ambitious for pupils to achieve their very best. Leaders have thought hard about what they want pupils to learn in each subject as they move through the school. Teachers get to know each pupil as an individual. Teachers understand pupils' very specific special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in detail. They use pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans very effectively to plan pupils' learning. Teachers receive highly effective training and support to improve their skills. As a result, they are able to change the way they teach, swiftly if needed, so that pupils understand and remember what they learn.

Leaders are clear that they want pupils to be able to read and communicate so they can

learn well in different subjects and become successful adults. Leaders make early reading and communication a top priority. As soon as pupils join the school, they start to learn the communication skills they need. The teaching of reading and communication is extremely well organised. In the early years, children enjoy lots of interesting and well-planned activities. These are carefully selected to develop their attention and listening skills. Early years staff get to know pupils quickly so that learning can start straight away. Pupils develop a love of reading by listening to lots of different types of stories and rhymes. Phonics is taught extremely well. Teachers quickly spot any pupils who start to fall behind in the programme and give them the extra help they need. Pupils learn to read books that are at just the right level for their reading ability.

Leaders make sure that pupils' learning is not limited to academic subjects. Pupils enjoy wide-ranging, fun activities and experiences that broaden their learning. Pupils told us about the different clubs they belong to, such as the yoga club, which helps them feel relaxed. School council members are proud of their responsibilities. They help to organise fund-raising activities and talk to leaders about how to make the school even better.

Students in the sixth form get precisely the right support to help them get ready for when they leave the school. Students learn to travel by themselves so that they can confidently get to work or college. Knowledgeable staff support students to decide what they want to do when they leave the school. Students study the right courses and attend appropriate work placements. These help to make sure that they develop the skills they need to be successful when they leave. Impressively, several students already have a part-time job before they leave the school. All the students who left the school last year either got a paid job, joined a work-related programme, or went to college.

Pupils can concentrate on their work because behaviour is managed exceptionally well. We were really impressed with how respectfully pupils listened to each other in their groups and classes. Staff all use the same approaches so that pupils understand exactly what is expected of them wherever they are in the school.

Staff say that leaders care about their well-being. Some staff are trained as mental health first-aiders and know how to assist other staff when needed. Recent changes to the school's assessment procedures have helped to reduce the workload of staff. As a result, staff told us that they feel really well supported by leaders.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Helpful training ensures that staff are highly proficient in noticing when pupils might be at risk of harm. Any concerns about a pupil's safety or welfare are swiftly reported to the safeguarding team. Leaders follow up any concerns promptly. They work efficiently with external professionals to make sure that pupils get the help they need.

Staff know pupils and their families personally. Leaders provide families with early help and support when they need it. For example, the school's family support worker visits families at home if a pupil is not attending school regularly to help them get back to

school.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains so. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged Brookfields Special School to be outstanding on 15 September 2010.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	110186
<b>Local authority</b>	West Berkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10111401
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of students in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	238
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	52
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Anne Murdoch and Stephen Flint (Co-chairs)
<b>Headteacher</b>	Brandon Mills
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.brookfieldschool.org">www.brookfieldschool.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	9 March 2016

## Information about this school

- Brookfields is a special school that caters for pupils from the age of 3 to 19 years.
- Brookfields provides for pupils who have moderate or severe learning difficulties. Some pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Many pupils have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The headteacher was appointed in 2017 and was not in post at the time of the previous inspection.
- The school runs an after-school club on the school site.
- The school was not using any alternative provision at the time of this inspection.

## Information about this inspection

- We held meetings with senior leaders, middle leaders, the early years leader and a group of support staff.
- We evaluated the quality of education by looking in detail at the teaching of early reading and communication, mathematics, and physical education. We discussed the curriculum design with leaders, carried out lesson visits, scrutinised pupils' work and spoke to pupils and teachers, from the lessons visited, about the curriculum.
- We evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding. The school's single central record was reviewed. We met with the designated safeguarding lead, scrutinised documentation, including a sample of case files, and spoke to pupils and staff.
- The lead inspector met with some governors, including the co-chairs of the governing body.
- We met with pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils informally about the school. No pupils responded to Ofsted's online pupil survey.
- We took account of the 56 responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey, and 56 additional free-text responses. An inspector met with a few parents at the beginning of the first day of the inspection.
- We considered the views of 116 members of staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey.
- The lead inspector spoke to the school improvement partner on the telephone.

## Inspection team

Claire Prince, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Hilary Goddard

Ofsted Inspector

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