

Inspection of a good school: Briar Hill Primary School

Thorn Hill, Briar Hill, Northampton, Northamptonshire, NN4 8SW

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 September 2021

Outcome

Briar Hill Primary School continues to be a good school.

There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if the inspector were to carry out a section 5 inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a section 5 inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school. They wear their school uniform with pride. Older pupils feel well prepared for secondary school and say that leaders help them to believe in themselves. Parents and carers and pupils describe the school as a welcoming place where everyone is accepted.

Pupils feel safe in school. They know where to go if they are worried and that adults will look after them if they have any worries. They know that their voice matters. For example, they are proud that leaders trusted them to take on improving the school environment.

Pupils are well mannered and courteous. They say that bullying is rare and that staff help them to resolve any issues quickly. Pupils can concentrate in lessons because they are not interrupted by poor behaviour. Teachers in the early years help pupils to develop positive relationships. Concepts such as consent, tolerance and diversity are explained to even the youngest pupils. As one pupil explained, 'There are no boys' or girls' clothes, there are just clothes.'

Parents, almost without exception, speak highly of the school. They see staff as friendly and approachable. Many parents comment on how leaders have adapted the school environment and the curriculum to help their children succeed.

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

Leaders ensure that reading is given the highest priority. The headteacher leads with an ambition to ensure that all pupils, regardless of background, succeed in reading. Leaders understand that some pupils do not have access to high-quality books outside school. They have prioritised developing pupils' communication and vocabulary to support their

understanding of the curriculum. Pupils enjoy sharing books from the class library and explain how literature 'takes [them] to a different place'. Older pupils talk about how books have helped them to develop an understanding and acceptance of different communities.

Teachers ensure that pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read follow a carefully planned programme. Teachers make regular checks on which sounds pupils have remembered. When pupils have forgotten sounds, leaders ensure that extra lessons help them to catch up. Teachers have received effective training in the teaching of phonics. Teachers ensure that reading books closely match to the sounds that pupils know.

Leaders have evaluated and refined curriculum plans to make sure that they are ambitious, set out important knowledge clearly, and meet pupils' needs. The mathematics curriculum is ambitious and well planned. Curriculum plans set out the key knowledge and skills pupils should learn from early years to Year 6. Leaders have ensured that pupils are secure in their understanding of basic concepts. Pupils' books show that lessons help them to know and remember more. The mathematics leader ensures that teachers receive ongoing training and professional development to teach mathematics.

Curriculum plans in history do not show how pupils will develop their understanding to become experts in the subject. For example, they do not show how pupils will get better at using sources or how historical interpretations can differ.

Pupils have many opportunities to participate in different clubs and societies. COVID-19 (coronavirus) has impacted the number of clubs on offer. Plans are in place to ensure that they resume quickly. Leaders put pupils' well-being and safety at the centre of everything they do.

Parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) say that the school supports their children well. The school's SEND and pastoral teams help families to access support from other services. The special educational needs and disabilities coordinators (SENDCos) help teachers to understand how to adapt the curriculum into smaller steps to enable pupils with SEND to succeed.

Leaders make robust checks to ensure all pupils attend school. However, attendance has been hindered due to COVID-19.

Teachers say that leaders have taken positive steps to reduce their workload. They feel well supported, explaining how they are given extra time to complete any additional work. Teachers say that leaders provide ongoing professional development and well-developed planning to help them teach. Staff are proud to work at the school.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspector agreed that further developing curriculum plans may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is given the highest priority. Leaders are vigilant and report concerns quickly. The pastoral and SEND teams ensure that there is effective communication with families. They ensure that pupils receive support as soon as a need arises. Sometimes leaders change curriculum plans to ensure they have extra lessons on how to keep safe online and offline. Leaders work well with other agencies to ensure that pupils and families get the support they need. They provide challenge when this is not the case.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Curriculum plans set out very clearly the substantive knowledge that pupils need to know. However, in history the plans do not show how pupils will acquire specific technical knowledge in order to improve their understanding of the practices of the subject. Leaders should refine curriculum plans for history so pupils will develop knowledge of the practices of this subject. Leaders need to ensure all curriculum plans have sufficient detail to help pupils build specific technical knowledge in all subjects.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 26 and 27 May 2016.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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 the school and 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

Unique reference number	138917
Local authority	West Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10199798
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	275
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Damien Panton
Headteacher	Jane Cooksley
Website	www.briarhillprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 – 27 May 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection there has been significant changes in the leadership team. Two new assistant headteachers, a new chair and vice chair of governors have been appointed.
- The school is part of The David Ross Education Trust, a national multi-academy trust of 22 primary schools, 10 secondary schools, one special school and one all-through academy school.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in their school evaluation.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, senior leaders, the SENDCo and curriculum leaders. A meeting was held with representatives from The David Ross Education Trust and of the school's local governing body.
- The inspector looked closely at the quality of education in early reading, mathematics and history. This involved speaking with leaders, staff and pupils. The inspector visited

lessons and reviewed samples of pupils' work. Subject plans and samples of pupils' work for art and design were reviewed.

- The inspector considered a wide range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding and behaviour. A meeting was held with pupils and staff to evaluate the school's safeguarding culture. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school was considered.
- The inspector considered the views of parents, pupils and staff shared through the Ofsted surveys and by meeting parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Shaheen Hussain, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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