

Inspection of a good school: The Bolsover School

Mooracre Lane, Bolsover, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S44 6XA

Inspection dates:

2 and 3 November 2021

Outcome

The Bolsover School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to attend The Bolsover School. They told inspectors: 'This is the best school ever!' They appreciate that their teachers work hard to keep them safe, well informed and well educated. Pupils feel listened to. Their views and opinions are valued. Their suggestions have contributed to the school's continuing improvement.

Pupils like being in a tutor group with younger and older pupils. They like that they can look out for younger peers and have someone older to turn to if they need advice. They said that their tutor group was like a 'family within the bigger school family'. This helps them to feel safe. Pupils understand what bullying is. They said that it rarely happens but if it did, they would be confident that teachers would deal with it quickly.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' conduct. Pupils and teachers understand 'the Bolsover blueprint curriculum'. The school is a calm and purposeful place. Pupils behave well. They are polite and wear their uniform with pride.

Learning does not stop at the end of the school day. Pupils and staff enjoy 'curriculum-plus'. Pupils' eyes light up when they describe the rich opportunities they are offered. Many enjoy the chance to sing, cook, play games, learn a new sport, dance, study for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme or 'eat biscuits and learn more maths'.

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

Leaders determinedly work to ensure that pupils become 'trustworthy, brave and successful' individuals. Leaders want pupils to leave school and go on to make a positive contribution to their community and to wider society. This intent informs curriculum design and planning. Pupils study a breadth of subjects at key stages 3 and 4. They benefit greatly from a carefully structured personal development programme that includes expert careers advice and guidance. Pupils move on to appropriate next steps when they leave the school. Many alumni return to share their successes with their teachers.

The curriculum is ambitious in some of the subjects taught in school, particularly mathematics and English. Careful planning sets out the important knowledge that pupils need to learn. This knowledge is built on over time. It is revisited to help pupils use what they have learned with confidence. In some foundation subjects, there is not enough opportunity for pupils to practise, apply, experiment and consolidate their learning. This is a barrier to them truly deepening their knowledge and applying it fluently.

The curriculum has been carefully adapted so that it supports pupils to catch up quickly with any lost learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Pupils demonstrate good recall. They understand how prior learning supports their future learning. Inspectors encountered confident pupils who now feel much better prepared for their examinations.

Leaders invest in the professional development of all staff. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Many are passionate about the subjects that they teach. In art, for example, the subject leader is determined to raise the profile of the subject. She wants to ensure that pupils benefit from a rich culture of the arts across the school community. Teachers access a range of training opportunities, including attending trust subject networks. Teachers said that they appreciate the opportunities afforded them. In lessons, they present information clearly. They use questions skilfully to check pupils' understanding. They address any misconceptions that pupils may have.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. They want to ensure an environment that 'lifts aspiration'. Pupil exclusions have reduced dramatically. Fewer pupils are temporarily removed from lessons because of poor behaviour. Behaviour management is consistently implemented and routines are well understood by the whole school community. Pupils who require help to improve their conduct receive short-term support in the trust reintegration centre on the school site. Pupils continue their learning in this provision and receive guidance, counselling and support. The curriculum is not always matched to need. This can lead to any gaps in pupils' knowledge not being fully addressed.

Leaders, including governors, are proud of this school. They are determined to 'give every pupil the chance to succeed'. There has been a cultural shift and a lot of positive change because of their strong-minded determination and hard work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong safeguarding culture throughout the school. Staff are well trained. Staff know pupils and their families well. Leaders are tenacious in ensuring that the most vulnerable pupils receive extensive support in a timely manner.

Representatives of the LGBTQ+ pupil community said that this was a safe school for them to be. Some are supported to transition and are given significant help during this challenging time in their lives. The LGBTQ+ group provides strong support.

The personal development curriculum provides pupils with the information they need to help keep them safe. Pupils say that there are people in school to speak to about any concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is not enough planned curriculum time in some subjects. Pupils study a breadth of subjects, but sometimes not to sufficient depth. This is hindering some pupils from making the most of their learning. Leaders must make sure that the curriculum allows pupils to deepen their understanding and to apply their learning with fluency.
- The curriculum for pupils who are not in lessons due to poor conduct is not matched to their academic needs. This can mean that they fall behind in their learning. Leaders must make sure that a well-planned and sequenced curriculum is in place, it is well taught and that it ensures that pupils catch up so that they can reintegrate back to their studies with confidence.

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 evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 in June 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	138836
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10199892
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	838
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Steve Hopkins
Headteacher	Matthew Hall
Website	http://www.thebolsoverschool.org
Date of previous inspection	28 June 2016

Information about this school

- The school joined the Redhill Academy Trust in 2018.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the executive headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team. Meetings were also held with subject leaders and the leader with oversight of the reintegration centre. The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of the Redhill Academy Trust, and three members of the local academy board, including the chair.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in English, mathematics and art. In each subject, inspectors visited lessons, scrutinised pupils' work and held discussions with subject leaders, teachers and pupils. They met with the leader of personal development.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors spoke to pupils and members of staff. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader and her deputy. Policies, procedures and record-keeping were scrutinised. Case files were

sampled to explore the quality of the support received by pupils who may be vulnerable to risk.

- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation, including policies and record-keeping for behaviour management, exclusions and attendance.
- Inspectors considered 81 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online survey, including 48 free-text comments. They considered the 81 responses to the pupils’ survey. There were no responses to the staff survey. The lead inspector reviewed an analysis of the school’s own recent survey of staff views.

Inspection team

Jayne Ashman, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Dick Vasey

Ofsted Inspector

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