

Inspection of a good school: Bracken Lane Primary Academy

Bracken Lane, Retford, Nottinghamshire, DN22 7EU

Inspection dates:

30 November and 1 December 2021

Outcome

Bracken Lane Primary Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at their friendly school. Pupils, parents and carers, and staff say: 'We are a family'. Pupils say the Bracken Lane Behaviours are helping them to be confident. They care about their friends and want to do their best.

Pupils are keen readers. They are proud of their speedy arithmetic. Pupils are curious to learn new things. Teachers set quizzes and revisit important knowledge to help them to remember more. Pupils like to work hard. They learn about local coal mining, while older pupils recall how important people shaped history, such as Cleopatra.

Pupils get on well together. At celebration assemblies, pupils celebrate each other's achievements at school and in the community. They enjoy clubs, such as gardening and football. They play basketball and use the outdoor gym at playtimes. Pupils learn to discuss topics through the pupil parliament, and give to the community by donating to the local foodbank.

Pupils say that they feel safe and trust adults to help them sort out any worries they may have. They are confident adults will act quickly to resolve any bullying, should it happen.

Opportunities to promote pupils' emotional and physical well-being are well considered. Parents are grateful for the support the school provided during national lockdowns.

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

All leaders and staff strive to provide every pupil with a good education. The trust helps leaders to ensure that interesting topics cover the most important knowledge they want pupils to know for all subjects. This knowledge is built up over time. Teachers regularly check what pupils remember and understand. This enables teachers to plan next steps in pupils' learning and identify any extra support which pupils may need. New curriculum leaders have not yet completed training to lead development in their subjects.

Leaders ensure that high-quality reading books are carefully selected to match topics across the curriculum. Leaders have made sure that phonics is taught well from the start of Reception. The books that pupils are given to read match their reading abilities. Pupils read with fluency and confidence. Those who are falling behind receive the right support so that they can catch up. Throughout the school, staff promote a love of reading and of books. Teachers read to pupils every day to expand their vocabulary. Pupils can understand complex language in books they read.

The mathematics curriculum is well planned. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They make sure that pupils build up their knowledge in a systematic way. Teachers spot and address any misconceptions. Pupils regularly practise arithmetic, so they quickly calculate accurate answers. Sometimes they use this to solve complex problems.

Teachers ensure that pupils learn and revisit important knowledge across all subjects. In history, for example, pupils revisit what they know about the development of the wheel to understand why it has been made of different materials at different times. In some subjects, including history, teachers do not routinely show pupils how to use their knowledge, so that they can do more. This includes teaching pupils how to apply what they know to studying more complex ideas.

Leaders ensure that all pupils follow a broad curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have access to the same curriculum as other pupils. Teachers adapt how they teach to ensure that these pupils keep up. Teachers quickly spot when pupils need more support. Leaders make sure this is put in place.

Leaders want to give pupils valuable experiences. For example, pupils enjoy residential trips and visiting historical places. Pupils' mental and physical well-being is prioritised. Pupils know the importance of respect, including of different beliefs. Pupils across the school build understanding about personal space and how to protect themselves. Year 6 pupils are helped to prepare for secondary school. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities around the school.

Children quickly settle into the stimulating Nursery and Reception classes. Relationships are very positive between children and adults. Children confidently take part in routines. Teachers make sure every interesting activity builds up children's important learning. Leaders provide effective training, so all adults give children skilful support. Children learn and practise lots of new vocabulary. Leaders think about how learning in Nursery and Reception connects with learning that pupils encounter in the future. Children have a strong basis of knowledge to build on.

'The trust is the school, the school is the trust', teachers and leaders say. They appreciate continuous training and share expertise with other trust schools. Many staff have progressed and taken on more responsibility. New staff receive just the right support to quickly be a valued part of the school team.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff know safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Staff receive regular training. They share information quickly because the smallest concern could be important.

Leaders make thorough recruitment checks and log concerns diligently. Leaders work well with other agencies. Staff are tenacious in securing the right support for children.

Pupils say they 'look out for each other'. They trust adults to help them with worries. Teachers teach pupils how to keep safe, including when online. Pupils are alert to the risks and benefits of the online world.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, including history, pupils do not achieve as highly as they could. Teachers do not routinely enable pupils to apply what they know to the study of more complex ideas, so enabling them to know and do more. Leaders should make sure that pupils receive opportunities to consider how what they already know helps them to explore more complex ideas, so that pupils understand and can do more, allowing them to achieve consistently well in all subjects.
- Curriculum leaders for foundation subjects are new to post and do not yet have the expertise to lead their subjects. This limits their ability to bring about improvements in their subjects, including through leading on curriculum development. Leaders should ensure that subject leaders have the necessary knowledge and skills to lead their subject areas successfully and improve the curriculum.

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 predecessor school, Bracken Lane Primary School, to be good in January 2013.

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	144526
Local authority	Nottinghamshire County Council
Inspection number	10199528
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	241
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Michael William Quigley
Principal	Gareth Letton (executive principal) Helen Cawkill (principal)
Website	https://www.brackenlaneprimary-ac.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Bracken Lane Primary Academy converted to become an academy school in September 2017. When its predecessor school, Bracken Lane Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school joined the Diverse Academies Trust in September 2017.
- The principal was appointed in 2019.
- The school has a nursery class.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the principal, executive principal, vice principal, assistant principal and other leaders.

- The inspector met with the chief executive officer, and the chief education officer of the multi-academy trust, a trustee, and the chair of the local governing body.
- The inspector considered a range of documents, including school policies.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. She met with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with teachers and met with pupils. She listened to pupils reading to adults. She considered curriculum plans and scrutinised samples of pupils' work. The inspector also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- The inspector met with groups of pupils. She visited the breakfast club and the playground at lunchtime.
- The single central record was scrutinised as part of the inspection of safeguarding. The inspector spoke with a range of staff and pupils and considered records which the school keeps.
- The inspector spoke with parents and carers at the start of the school day. She considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including the responses to the free-text facility. She also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Mandy Wilding, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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