

Inspection of The Brooksbank School

Victoria Road, Elland, West Yorkshire HX5 0QG

Inspection dates:

16 and 17 February 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are not safe in this school. Staff do not challenge unruly and dangerous behaviour that occurs during social times. Physical violence among some pupils is a regular occurrence. Many pupils have experienced bullying, harassment and/or discrimination.

When in lessons, pupils' behaviour is better. Pupils' learning varies across the school. In some lessons, teachers explain new ideas clearly and check that pupils have understood. However, this is inconsistent. Furthermore, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and pupils in lower sets are more likely to have their learning disrupted by poor behaviour. A small number of pupils are removed from lessons and educated in the 'Link' provision. The education these pupils receive is inadequate and not enough is done to make sure they are safe. Some parents have felt pressured to accept pupils being removed from lessons or the school, in order to avoid permanent exclusion. This practice constitutes off-rolling according to Ofsted's definition.

Pupils praised individual teachers who have continued to support them despite the significant issues in the school. However, some pupils do not feel confident that staff will help them if they have a concern. Sixth form students feel more positive about the pastoral support they receive.

The teaching given to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain is lacking. It does not ensure that pupils know how to relate to others or how to be safe and active citizens in later life.

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

The school is not a safe environment for pupils. Fighting is a common occurrence during social times. A number of pupils told inspectors they were afraid of being 'jumped' in school. There are many areas of the school where pupils don't feel safe. Some staff who supervise pupils do not challenge poor behaviour. Many pupils do not trust staff to protect them from dangerous situations. This poor behaviour affects pupils in all year groups, including those in the Sixth Form. Many sixth form pupils also do not feel safe in school. Staff do not feel supported by leaders to manage behaviour. New leaders have begun to take action to improve behaviour in lessons. This has reduced low-level disruption in classrooms so that, in more lessons, pupils are able to concentrate on their learning. However, these steps have not been sufficient to make the school a safe place for pupils.

The school has not created a culture where all pupils are respected and treated equally by their peers. Pupils are discriminated against because of their race and religion. Pupils frequently hear racist language. Leaders have done little to address this. Pupils are also targeted because of their sexual orientation. Pupils hear discriminatory language, such as homophobic language, every day. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and other (LGBTQ+) pupils at the school do not feel

safe. Discrimination by gender is also common. Some pupils judge others on how they look. Leaders have taken some steps to address these issues, but this has not gone far or fast enough. They have failed to monitor incidents of discrimination and so have not identified the extent of the problem or acted swiftly enough to address it.

While leaders have failed to keep children safe, staff have tried to offer pupils a range of wider opportunities. Many pupils take part in raising money for charities and in enterprise activities. A number of older pupils take on responsibilities in the school, such as leading assemblies or mentoring younger pupils. The guidance pupils receive about their future careers is useful and extensive. They hear from a wide range of employers and providers of further education. Pupils in the sixth form are well-informed about their future options. The support pupils receive means that all pupils go on to appropriate future destinations.

The curriculum lacks ambition in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, religious education and relationships and sex education. Pupils do not learn enough about other cultures, faiths and beliefs and the curriculum fails to teach pupils the importance of respect and tolerance of others. The PSHE curriculum is more appropriate in the sixth form and better prepares pupils for life after they leave the school. However, the PSHE curriculum in the sixth form does not teach students enough about the importance of equalities, and some students do not understand that homophobic and discriminatory language is wrong.

In subjects such as English, mathematics, science and history, the curriculum is more ambitious and leaders are clear about what pupils need to learn. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and they present new material clearly. In some subjects, assessment is used well to check pupils' understanding and teachers revisit what pupils have learned. This helps pupils to remember content in the long term. Teachers in the sixth form have good subject knowledge and help students to understand complex ideas and develop secure knowledge of their subjects.

Pupils, including those in the lower sets and pupils with SEND, do not benefit from the stronger quality of education evident in some subjects. This is because lessons are affected by poor behaviour. Some pupil groups have not had the same support to address gaps in their knowledge as pupils in higher sets. The school does not support its most vulnerable pupils effectively or make them feel included. A number of pupils are removed from the school and educated in the 'Link' provision. They receive a narrow curriculum and poor teaching.

Leaders have begun to focus on improving pupils' reading. Teachers have begun to identify important vocabulary which pupils need to know and teach this regularly. Pupils who are not yet fluent readers are identified. They are given extra support, although this does not always ensure that they learn to read fluently as quickly as possible. Some form tutors encourage pupils to read in tutor time, but this is not the case across the school.

Pupils in this school, and their families, have been let down by leaders and those responsible for governance. The school has experienced significant turbulence at leadership level. Leaders have not made decisions in the best interest of pupils. Significant concerns have been raised by staff, pupils and parents. These have not been acted upon. Governors have not challenged leaders to improve. They have not assured themselves of improvements by testing what leaders tell them or checking that improvements are making a difference to pupils. Leaders who have recently been appointed have tried to address some of the issues the school is facing. However, they have not done enough to keep pupils safe or to ensure that all pupils receive the education they deserve.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders have not taken action to reduce the risk of harm to pupils. When pupils are identified as being at risk, little is done to support them or to keep them safe. Leaders are not always aware of further risks which vulnerable pupils may face, and they are not proactive in reducing these risks. When serious incidents have occurred, leaders have not taken action to prevent similar incidents occurring in future. Some of the most vulnerable pupils in the school are removed from lessons and their safety is not well-managed by leaders.

Sexual harassment is distressingly common. Some staff described this as a 'culture' in the school. Many pupils regularly experience inappropriate comments. There have been a number of instances of inappropriate touching and assault. Some pupils also experience shocking threats of sexual violence. Leaders are not doing enough to protect pupils from these experiences or reduce the risk to pupils.

The knowledge and training of staff on how to keep pupils safe is poor. Leaders have failed to ensure that teachers know the risks pupils may face in this school. Pupils have lost trust in the ability of leaders and staff to keep them safe. A number of pupils said that they do not bother to report concerns because they don't think these would be dealt with. However, pupils did praise some individual staff who do their best to support them.

Records of concerns are not analysed effectively. These do not allow leaders to identify patterns which might identify pupils who need help. Information which could keep children safe is not shared with the right people at the right time. This places pupils at risk of harm, neglect or abuse.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school is not a safe place for pupils. Physical violence, bullying, discrimination and harassment are common. Many pupils fear for their safety. Leaders must act immediately to ensure that all pupils are safe in school at all times. They must

ensure that pupils are adequately supervised, and that all staff challenge poor behaviour consistently.

- The school does not do enough to keep its most vulnerable pupils safe. This means that pupils are at risk. Leaders must ensure that action is taken quickly when a concern is raised about a pupil. They must be proactive in identifying further risks to pupils and take action to reduce these. Safeguarding records should be improved so that these help leaders to keep pupils safe. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the knowledge they need to identify pupils who may be at risk.
- Discrimination, harassment and bullying are common. As a result, many pupils do not feel safe or comfortable being themselves. Leaders should ensure that pupils are taught the importance of respect and tolerance for others and understand the impact of hurtful and discriminatory language. They must challenge any discrimination and harassment quickly and take action to prevent this happening in future.
- A weak culture of leadership and governance has allowed issues in the school to go unaddressed. Leaders and those responsible for governance must create regular, safe opportunities for staff, pupils and parents to raise concerns. They must take all concerns seriously and act upon these swiftly. They must go beyond superficial checks to assure themselves that the school is keeping pupils safe and providing all pupils with a good quality of education.
- All pupils do not receive the same quality of education. Pupils who are removed from lessons do not receive the same curriculum offer as other pupils. Pupils in lower sets and those with SEND are more likely to have their learning disrupted by poor behaviour and are less likely to have gaps in their knowledge addressed. Leaders must ensure that all pupils have access to the same broad curriculum and get the support they need to address gaps in their knowledge.

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	137521
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	10220063
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,771
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	266
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Marion Bain
Headteacher	Debbie Shutter
Website	www.bbs.calderdale.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	29 and 30 November 2016

Information about this school

- The Brooksbank School is a larger than average secondary school with a sixth form.
- The school is part of a single-academy trust.
- A number of senior leaders have recently left employment at the school. In January 2022, the deputy headteacher took on the role of acting headteacher. Since January, the school has also appointed another deputy headteacher and has been supported by leaders from other schools.
- The school places pupils in an alternative provision (the 'Link' provision) which is run by school staff. This is described by leaders as 'on-site'. However, this provision is located some distance from the school and physically separated from the school building.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead and other safeguarding leaders. They reviewed documentation related to safeguarding and referrals to the local authority. They spoke to staff about how they keep children safe and spoke to pupils about their experiences.
- During the inspection, inspectors became concerned that not enough was being done to support pupils who were at risk. Inspectors requested that leaders take immediate action and reviewed these actions to assure themselves that these pupils were getting the support they needed.
- Inspectors talked to staff, pupils and parents. They analysed the 381 responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey, including 369 free-text responses. They also considered the 95 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 577 responses to our pupil survey.
- Inspectors visited the school's alternative provision and spoke to pupils who have been removed from lessons.
- Inspectors discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the school and have taken this into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, science, history, and art. As part of this, they held discussions with senior leaders, subject leaders and teachers. They also talked to pupils about their learning, and looked at work they had completed.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator, spoke to pupils with SEND, reviewed plans to support these pupils and visited lessons to see how these pupils are supported to learn.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the governing body and reviewed documentation relating to governance.

Inspection team

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