

Inspection of Barrs Court School

Barrs Court Road, Hereford, Herefordshire HR1 1EQ

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Barrs Court School is a special place to be. Pupils learn from the moment they arrive in school until they leave at the end of the day. Staff treat pupils with dignity and respect. As a result, pupils respect staff and show empathy to each other. Pupils know that staff look after them well. They say they have an adult in school they can talk to if they have any concerns.

At the heart of the school's work is leaders' determination that all pupils will make good choices, communicate well and identify and deal with any difficulties they may face. This is seen in all aspects of school life. Staff are aware of the smallest signs that pupils may be finding things tricky and take proactive steps to help pupils to manage this. Pupils are supported very well to manage their own behaviour.

Staff expect all pupils to be as independent as they can be. They make sure that all pupils are taught to express their opinions and make choices. Pupils choose from the considerable number of extra-curricular opportunities activities that are designed to match their interests. All pupils have the opportunity to attend a week's residential where they take part in group activities to challenge and inspire them. For many pupils, this is the first time they have been away from home.

Leaders and staff work effectively with parents, who are very positive about the education their children receive.

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

Staff have high ambitions for their pupils. They make sure that all pupils have the highest quality education so that they can be prepared well for adulthood. Staff know pupils' needs extremely well. They use this understanding to create a positive environment in which pupils continually thrive.

Leaders have carefully identified the important things that pupils should know. Highly effective teachers and expert teaching assistants adapt lessons so that all pupils are able to learn this information. For example, in personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons, pupils are taught about healthy relationships. Some pupils learn about how to identify safe adults, and others are supported to express their views about what they like or do not like, using suitable communication aids. This makes sure that pupils can communicate clearly if things go wrong. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. They use assessment well to identify the small steps of progress that pupils make. Staff are persistent. They make sure that all pupils can show that they know what has been taught before they move on.

Leaders are determined to make sure that all pupils can read. In key stage 3, pupils learn phonics. Teaching is carefully adapted to the needs of the pupils. Some pupils learn about how to track objects to prepare them for reading. Other pupils learn phonics sounds and use their communication aids to show their knowledge. Pupils who read more fluently read books that carefully match sounds and that are

appropriate to their individual needs. In key stage 4, pupils who cannot read fluently continue to learn how to decode words and this is applied to what they will need in adulthood. They learn to read useful signs and to complete basic forms.

Pupils are thoroughly prepared for their next steps. Pupils develop their talents and interests through an extensive wider curriculum offer. They make choices about what they would like to do. For example, older pupils are supported to develop their own interests, take part in social activities or join the leisure centre as this helps prepare them for adulthood. Teachers run a range of exciting lunchtime clubs to meet pupils' needs. Some younger pupils attend a gardening club, which supports their sensory needs and makes sure that they are ready to learn in the afternoon. The popular music club is attended by many pupils, some with communication aids. Most pupils participate in the annual show at the local theatre. Pupils perform or work backstage. This helps pupils become more confident and resilient.

Careers provision is a real strength. As soon as they join the school, all pupils learn about careers. They explore their talents and aspirations and find out about ambitious future pathways. In Years 10 and 11, all pupils go on work experience. They choose where they would like to go and are interviewed for the position they have applied for. All pupils attend an annual careers fair, where local colleges and providers attend the school for the day. Pupils are challenged to have high aspirations for their future.

Barrs Court School is a busy school. Staff work hard. They say that leaders are mindful of their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders prioritise keeping pupils safe. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding. They are well trained and report all concerns, no matter how small. This vigilance means that leaders are proactive in seeking the right support for pupils. Leaders are relentless in challenging other agencies if they think that they are not providing the right help. Pupils are taught to keep safe. They are taught about consent and learn how to identify and name feelings or behaviours that upset them. Leaders make sure that all adults who work in the school have the right checks.

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.

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	139607
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	10241038
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	86
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tim Newsholme
Headteacher	Lisa Appleton (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.barrscourtschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 and 23 October 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Barrs Court School is a special provision for pupils with complex needs.
- The school is on two sites. Key stage 3 pupils attend the Barrs Court Road site. Key stage 4 pupils attend the Hub at Symmonds Street.
- At the time of inspection, there were no students in the sixth form.
- The school meets the Baker Clause. This means that pupils in Years 8 to 13 receive information about the full range of education and training available to them. This includes opportunities for a range of education and training providers to speak to pupils about the pathways open to them.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors held discussions with the headteacher and other senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors held discussions with teachers and representatives of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in communication and language, physical development, early reading and PSHE. For each of these subjects, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with members of staff individually and in groups and spoke to pupils at various points during the inspection. Inspectors took account of responses to staff surveys, as well as Ofsted Parent View. There were no responses to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors looked at records relating to behaviour, bullying, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding arrangements by checking the school's approach to staff recruitment, scrutinising policy documents and meeting with the designated safeguarding lead.

Inspection team

Claire Price, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Janet Lewis

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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