

Inspection of Belper School and Sixth Form Centre

John O'Gaunts Way, Belper, Derbyshire DE56 0DA

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Belper School and Sixth Form Centre is an inclusive school. There are positive relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils are happy at school. Pupils can 'be who they are' and have their own identity. Pupils are well supported and cared for by staff. Bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that if bullying does happen, staff will deal with it well.

Most pupils behave well in lessons and at social times. Lessons are calm and orderly. Pupils say that a few teachers do not deal with low-level disruption consistently. There is good support for pupils who sometimes struggle to manage their behaviour. This helps them to behave better.

Leaders have high expectations of all students in the sixth form. Students value the support and guidance they receive. They say that if you ask for extra help, you always get it. Students say that teachers want the best for them.

There are a wide range of extra-curricular activities and clubs. For example, pupils can attend the LGBTQ+ group, film club, rock and pop choir and a variety of sports clubs. Pupils value the range of activities that the school offers.

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

Leaders have a sharp focus on improving the curriculum. In most subjects, curriculum plans are ambitious and well thought out. Subject leaders have thought about what they want pupils to learn and when. They have identified key knowledge and vocabulary that pupils in key stage 3 need to know. This helps pupils build on previous learning.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. Leaders have set out the teaching strategies that they want teachers to use. Leaders have provided training on these approaches. Not all teachers use these methods well enough. Some teachers do not adapt their teaching to address misconceptions. They do not ensure that all pupils have a secure understanding of key concepts.

In some subject areas, teachers check pupils' understanding well. This is not the case in all subjects. Some teachers do not check that pupils' knowledge is secure. This means that misconceptions and gaps in learning are not identified. Pupils then do not remember key knowledge as well as they should.

Leaders have recently introduced a new strategy to promote reading. Pupils take part in a reading morning once a week. 'Word of the week' activities help pupils to develop their vocabulary. Leaders identify pupils who need support with their reading. Staff use a range of strategies to support these pupils. This is beginning to help them become better readers. Leaders recognise that there is more work to do to help some pupils become fluent readers.

Leaders have ensured that systems are in place to identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers have the information to help them meet the needs of these pupils. Not all teachers use this information well. This means that some pupils with SEND do not get the support they need to access the curriculum. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not progress through the curriculum as well as they should.

Teachers of students in the sixth form have strong subject knowledge. Curriculum plans in the sixth form are well developed and the work that teachers set is demanding. Most teachers in the sixth form deliver the curriculum well. This means that students can build on what they already know and achieve well.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils. Pupils say that behaviour has improved. There are clear systems in place to manage poor behaviour and low-level disruption. A few staff do not use these systems well. This means that there are a few occasions when pupils disrupt learning. Leaders have prioritised improving pupils' attendance. Their actions are having a positive impact. However, some pupils are absent too often.

Leaders have developed a well-thought-out programme for pupils' personal development. There is a well-planned personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum in place. For example, pupils learn about relationships, British values and different cultures and religions. This helps pupils prepare for life in modern Britain. Pupils receive effective careers advice and guidance. Pupils experience a range of activities to help them learn about different careers. This helps them prepare for their future. Students in the sixth form have high aspirations. They say that the school has prepared them well for their next steps.

Staff are happy and proud to work at the school. Leaders are considerate of staff's workload and well-being. The governing body supports and challenges leaders well. Governors know the strengths of the school and what needs to improve.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders of safeguarding are knowledgeable. They keep detailed records and take appropriate action to support the most vulnerable pupils. They work well with external agencies. Staff are well trained and receive regular safeguarding updates. They know how to report any concerns through well-understood procedures.

Pupils feel safe in school. Pupils know how to report any concerns they may have. They know which staff they can go to if they have any concerns. Through the PSHE curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, they learn about healthy and unhealthy relationships.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not ensured that all teachers use the information they receive about pupils with SEND to deliver the curriculum effectively to these pupils. Some pupils with SEND have gaps in their learning. Leaders should ensure that all staff know how to use this information to meet the needs of pupils with SEND.
- Some teachers do not check pupils' understanding well. This means that misconceptions are not addressed. Some pupils do not have a secure understanding of key knowledge. Leaders must ensure that all teachers check pupils' knowledge and understanding, and provide clear feedback.
- Leaders are clear about the teaching methods teachers should use to implement the curriculum. Some teachers do not consistently use these approaches. Some pupils do not learn as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that all teachers use the agreed teaching methods effectively so that pupils can learn well.
- Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough, particularly disadvantaged pupils. This means that they miss lessons and fall behind in their learning. Leaders should continue to develop strategies to engage with these pupils so that their attendance improves.

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	112989
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10262544
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Foundation
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	1,218
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	140
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Claire Lightfoot
Headteacher	Nick Goforth
Website	www.belperschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 and 2 October 2019

Information about this school

- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses three registered alternative provisions and four unregistered provisions for a small number of pupils.
- Since the last inspection, there have been considerable changes to the leadership team, including the appointment of a new deputy headteacher.
- Since the previous inspection, a new chair of governors has been appointed.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and a range of staff.
- The lead inspector met with three representatives of the governing body.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, history, art and computer science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors visited lessons and form time.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from a range of year groups, including sixth-form students and pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors observed and spoke to pupils at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation relating to safeguarding, self-evaluation, behaviour and attendance and governance.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with representatives of some of the alternative provisions used by the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses of parents and staff through Ofsted Parent View and Ofsted's staff survey.
- The lead inspector evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding by meeting with the designated safeguarding lead and reviewing a range of documents, including the school's single central record.

Inspection team

Paul Halcro, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Janis Warren	Ofsted Inspector
Dick Vasey	Ofsted Inspector
Matthew Fearn-Davies	His Majesty's Inspector
Paul Sweeney	Ofsted Inspector

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