

# Inspection of Brookways School

660 London Road, North Cheam, Sutton SM3 9BZ

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Inspection dates: 24 to 26 January 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Brookways is a safe space for pupils. They are made to feel welcome, often coming to the school having been out of education for some time or when a previous placement has broken down. Most pupils say they enjoy school. For many, their attendance improves.

Pupils know that staff are there for them. Pupils say they have a trusted adult that they can go to for support. Leaders do not tolerate any form of bullying or discriminatory behaviour. Pupils are confident that if they reported an issue, such as bullying, it would be picked up quickly.

Leaders make sure that pupils receive the therapy support that is set out in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans. Leaders have made therapy a focal point in school life by basing it in a more central and larger space in the building. Pupils also enjoy spending time with the school dogs.

The school has recently been through a lot of change, particularly at senior leadership level. Staff expectations of what pupils should be achieving and of pupils' behaviour are not high enough. Behaviour routines are not well embedded. There are also inconsistencies in how well teaching is successfully adapted to meet pupils' different needs.

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

The new headteacher has hit the ground running and has started to make lots of positive changes. These are being welcomed by staff. There are still a few vacancies in subject leadership that leaders are finding difficult to fill. These vacancies are holding back curriculum development in some key areas, such as English.

Pupils study a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 also benefit from being able to take part in taster courses at the local college. Last year, the first Year 11 group to leave the school achieved a range of qualifications, including the highest grades, in their GCSE studies. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum teaches pupils about a range of topics, including equality, relationships and tolerance.

Leaders know there is inconsistency across the curriculum. This includes leaders' thinking about what pupils should learn and how well subjects are being taught. Leaders do not sharply focus on identifying the knowledge they want pupils to learn. Teaching focuses more on the activities that pupils will undertake rather than being clear on what pupils will learn from completing these activities.

Sometimes, EHC plans are not being used well to help set ambitious outcomes and targets for pupils. Also, the strategies identified for staff to use to adapt their teaching lack precision. Consequently, teaching is not helping pupils to achieve as well as they should.

Recent changes to the curriculum include a focus on reading. Leaders have introduced dedicated phonics sessions for younger pupils who need this support. However, staff lack the expertise needed to help pupils with their phonics. Also, some staff working with older pupils do not promote a love of reading well. Therefore, the quality of provision to help pupils become fluent, confident and enthusiastic readers varies across the school.

Some teachers have secure subject knowledge and use it to give clear explanations and ensure that pupils produce high-quality work. In cooking, for example, pupils' portfolios show how their knowledge and skills have built up over time. However, leaders have not given sufficient focus to developing pupils' writing across the school. Some pupils are not being well supported in building up their stamina, resilience and accuracy as writers.

Sometimes, adults do not use assessment as well as they should. They do not make sure that pupils make corrections to their work or check that pupils have understood what they have been taught. This is not helping pupils to close gaps in their knowledge.

Adults working with pupils do not have consistently high expectations for behaviour. Sometimes lessons do not get off to a positive start, for example with pupils arriving late or taking too long to settle. Some pupils are developing bad habits that are not being challenged. A few adults use terms such as 'darling' when talking to pupils. This does not help pupils to learn how they should communicate with those around them or people outside of school.

Pupils take part in a range of activities and lessons that prepare them for becoming an adult. This includes travel training and personal hygiene. Pupils are taught about careers and have access to independent advice and workshops. Staff make sure that pupils take part in different visits, including to support what they are learning in the classroom. Staff provide Friday 'enrichment' activities where pupils can access climbing, woodwork, cooking and different sports, for example. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is also offered to pupils. Pupils take an active part in assemblies where tutor groups give a presentation to their peers on a range of topics.

However, there is a very limited range of clubs for pupils to take part in other than the Friday enrichment. This is something emphasised both by pupils, and parents and carers in their views about the school. Overall, the daily life of the school is not promoting pupils' confidence, independence and resilience well enough. Leaders' approach to promoting personal development is not as coordinated as it should be.

The proprietor knows the school well and acknowledges the challenges facing the school. There are regular audits to check on the independent school standards. Senior members of the proprietary body are committed to making the required changes to help the school move forward under the direction of the new headteacher. Leaders have ensured that the school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school's safeguarding policy is written in line with statutory guidance and is available on the school's website.

Leaders are quick to respond to any concerns in relation to pupils' well-being. This includes regular communication with external agencies and ongoing support for parents. Leaders share information quickly with staff if there are any changes in pupils' circumstances. Staff are vigilant in monitoring and working together to keep pupils safe and well.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe through the PSHE curriculum, for example when using social media. Leaders also support pupils with one-to-one sessions as required, for example to manage their personal safety.

## What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- The school's approach to reading is not well embedded. Staff delivering this support lack expertise in systematically checking and helping pupils to use their phonics. As a result, weaker readers do not make the gains they should in learning to read. Older pupils are not developing a love of reading. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the highest level of expertise in teaching and promoting reading. They must monitor the effectiveness of their reading strategies more effectively.
- Leaders have not sufficiently focused their curriculum thinking on what they want pupils to learn. Some curriculum thinking lacks ambition and adaptations do not consistently link to the identified outcomes in pupils' EHC plans. Consequently, pupils are not learning the body of knowledge that they could be. Leaders need to review their curriculum thinking. They must make sure that in all subjects the knowledge and skills that pupils should learn are clearly set out and that adaptations better reflect pupils' EHC plan outcomes.
- Leaders and teachers do not support pupils as well as they should in helping them to become confident writers. Pupils are not able to practise and develop their writing in line with their targets and/or demands of the subject. Teachers should provide more well-planned writing activities, giving pupils the support needed to develop their confidence, stamina and accuracy.
- There are inconsistencies in how well the curriculum is taught. As a result, knowledge is not sticking in pupils' long-term memory. Leaders should ensure that teachers receive training to improve their teaching skills and their use of assessment.
- Some adults have low expectations for pupils' behaviour. Routines are not well embedded. Some staff speak to pupils in ways that do not model effective communication. Leaders should ensure that staff have high expectations. They

should provide clarity on the terms staff should not use when talking to pupils. They should also ensure that staff have the confidence and skills needed to consistently implement the school's behaviour policy.

- Some of the weaknesses in curriculum thinking and teaching equally apply to the personal development curriculum. Staff do not have a consistent approach in supporting pupils to be resilient and independent learners. Leaders should ensure that their work in this area is coherent. They should review the range of clubs on offer. They should ensure that staff take full advantage of the curriculum and its wider work to fully support pupils in developing their resilience and independence.

## **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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	144774
<b>DfE registration number</b>	319/6000
<b>Local authority</b>	Sutton
<b>Inspection number</b>	10254678
<b>Type of school</b>	Other Independent Special School
<b>School category</b>	Independent Special School
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7 to 17
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	68
<b>Proprietor</b>	Kedleston Group Limited
<b>Chair</b>	Paul Brosnan (Co-chair) Lee Reed (Co-chair)
<b>Headteacher</b>	Matthew Pickard
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£64,403
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8641 9191
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.kedlestongroup.com/Our-Schools-Homes/Day-Schools/Brookways-School/Home">www.kedlestongroup.com/Our-Schools-Homes/Day-Schools/Brookways-School/Home</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:brookways@kedelstongroup.com">brookways@kedelstongroup.com</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	2 to 4 October 2018

## Information about this school

- Brookways School opened in 2018. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- All pupils have autism spectrum disorder and a range of associated needs.
- Brookways is part of Kedleston Group Limited, which owns and operate several similar special schools across England.
- The headteacher took up their post in December 2022. Prior to the headteacher's appointment, interim headteachers from within the Kedleston Group, alongside support from a regional director, had been overseeing the school.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provision on a part-time basis.
- Pupils in key stage 4 attend North East Surrey College of Technology (Nescot) once a week as part of their curriculum.
- The school's first full standard inspection took place in October 2018. The school was judged to be good and all the independent school standards were met.
- The school had a material change inspection in February 2021 to increase the capacity of the school to 80 and widen the age range from 7 to 19 (previously being 7 to 17). Leaders subsequently decided not to admit sixth formers, and informed the Department for Education. The school therefore caters for pupils from age 7 to 17. This is reflected accurately in the government's 'get information about schools' website.

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

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 of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior staff. The lead inspector also met with leaders representing the proprietary body.
- The lead inspector also held telephone meetings with several local authority leaders to discuss safeguarding and the quality of education provided to pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English (including reading), mathematics, art and PSHE. During each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons and spoke to teachers and pupils about their learning. The inspectors also reviewed samples of pupils' work.

- The lead inspector also spoke to leaders and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work in other subjects, including physical education, humanities, cooking and life skills.
- Inspectors met with leaders with responsibility for safeguarding and behaviour. They reviewed a range of documentation, including pre-employment checks on staff, case studies and behaviour information. The inspector also considered the views of parents, staff and pupils to help evaluate the school's safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the online surveys for staff and pupils.
- Inspectors considered a range of evidence to evaluate compliance with the independent school standards.

### **Inspection team**

Sam Hainey, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jonathan Newby

Ofsted Inspector



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