

Inspection of a good school: Bitterne Park School

Dimond Road, Bitterne Park, Southampton, Hampshire SO18 1BU

Inspection dates: 17 to 18 January 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school. They speak positively about the importance of diversity and inclusivity. They are confident that staff respond to any reports of bullying quickly and effectively. Despite many pupils understanding the importance of positive behaviour in and around school, not all pupils abide by the behaviour policy. Occasionally, learning in lessons is disrupted and some behaviour around school falls short of leaders' high expectations.

Most pupils feel safe and know that staff prioritise their well-being. Leaders provide a range of positive opportunities for pupils to hear from a range of organisations to learn about safety in the local community.

Leaders have been making appropriate changes to the curriculum to support all pupils to meet ambitious goals. Leaders are aware that there is further training and support needed to ensure that these ambitions are realised.

Beyond the taught curriculum, pupils have a wide range of clubs available to attend at school. They also have a range of additional activities that they can participate in, including, for example, the school production.

As one parent said, 'the teachers at this school work hard, and there is a strong commitment to raising kind and respectful young people'.

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

Leaders are wholeheartedly committed to ensuring that all pupils benefit from their time at Bitterne Park School. The range of subjects available from Year 7 to Year 13 is broad and prepares pupils well for their next steps in education. The selection of what teachers

want pupils to learn in most subjects is suitably challenging and taught in an appropriate order.

Leaders are implementing improvements to individual subjects. For example, in English, leaders have updated the texts that pupils read to develop a richer understanding of a range of literature. Similarly, in languages, recent curriculum adjustments are supporting more pupils to access the curriculum and achieve well. As a result, the number of pupils selecting a language at key stage 4 is increasing quickly.

In some subjects, teachers regularly check that pupils understand what they are being taught. Teachers then adapt the lesson to respond to any arising misconceptions or gaps in knowledge. However, in some other subjects, some teachers do not systematically check on the knowledge of all pupils and adjust their teaching when needed. This means that in some lessons pupils move on to new content before they have secured the important knowledge they need. Some pupils therefore struggle to understand what they are being taught, and as a result the quality of their participation in lessons is weaker. Leaders are taking action to make rapid improvements to the quality of education that pupils receive.

Leaders have prioritised the important role that reading plays in supporting all pupils to access the broad and balanced curriculum. There is a sharp focus on ensuring that pupils who struggle to read confidently and competently are identified and provided with the rapid support that they need to improve. Furthermore, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are accurately identified and receive additional well-matched support to help them to access the curriculum.

In many lessons and around school, pupils demonstrate positive and respectful behaviours. However, some staff and pupils shared concerns about behaviour. In some lessons, learning is interrupted. There are some inconsistencies in how lateness to lessons and low-level pupil disruption are managed in lessons. Leaders have put in place actions to improve the conduct of pupils in and around the school. However, not all pupils meet leaders' high expectations for behaviour and at times the behaviour policy is not applied consistently. Leaders do not currently use all the information available to them to precisely monitor the impact of their actions to reduce the variability of low-level disruptive behaviour and conduct concerns within school.

Leaders know their pupils and families well. As a result, the personal, social and health education programme at the school is bespoke and age appropriate. Pupils learn about important themes within the local community and are taught important knowledge to help them to stay safe. Pupils are also provided with useful information to prepare for their next stages of education, employment or training. This is particularly strong in the sixth form.

Staff across the school are confident that their training needs are well understood by senior leaders. Most staff are also appreciative of the steps that leaders have taken to manage their individual workload. This includes recent changes to how teachers assess pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are acutely aware of the risks that pupils in their care might face. Staff receive regular and specific training and updates from leaders about safeguarding. As a result, staff are well informed about a wide range of safeguarding issues within the community. They know their responsibilities to identify and report safeguarding concerns accurately and in a timely manner. When concerns are raised, those responsible for safeguarding are quick to investigate and respond appropriately. Leaders work effectively with external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families get the help that they need. Leaders also seek the support of local organisations to support pupils to learn about important knowledge related to safety.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes teachers move pupils on to new learning before they have securely learned what they are being taught. This means that some pupils have gaps in their knowledge and misconceptions that prevent them from being successful. Leaders must ensure that all staff receive the support needed to ensure pupils are given clear feedback and the additional practice time needed to make improvements before they are introduced to more-complex content.
- There are some inconsistencies in the application of the behaviour policy within lessons. This means that some lateness to lessons and off-task behaviour that disrupt learning are not managed effectively. As a result, some pupils miss important learning time. Leaders must ensure that all staff are well supported to follow clear and well-communicated processes to reduce low-level disruptive behaviour and lateness that interrupt learning.
- Some pupils shared concerns about poor behaviour during social times. Leaders are taking action to reduce these concerns but not all pupils are yet confident that this behaviour is well managed. Leaders must take further action to review the impact of these initiatives and clearly and appropriately communicate their high expectations during social times to all members of the school community.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2017.

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	116458
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	10256499
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
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	2,023
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	156
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Matt Bishop
Headteacher	Stewart Roderick
Website	http://www.bitterneparkschool.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	29 and 30 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection there have been several changes to the leadership of the school. These changes include the headteacher, from September 2020, and the chair of the governing body. From September 2022 there have also been changes to the senior leadership team of the school.
- The school currently uses two alternative providers to provide education and support for a small number of pupils.
- The school has a resource base for pupils with autism spectrum disorder called 'The ARB'. Currently, 51 pupils are supported within the provision.
- 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.

Information about this inspection

- 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, languages, music and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with the subject leader, observed pupils at work, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders, including leaders of the specialist resource provision. The lead inspector also met with the director of education from the local authority.
- The inspection team reviewed a wide range of information provided by the school, including information about behaviour, minutes of governor meetings, and relevant school policies. Inspectors also reviewed leaders' own evaluation about the effectiveness of the school and their plans for further improvement.
- Inspectors talked to a wide range of pupils and observed their behaviour in lessons and during social times.
- Inspectors reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by looking at relevant documentation, staff recruitment checks and training records. The inspectors also talked to a range of staff and pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils to gather their views. They considered 297 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 258 free-text comments. Inspectors also took account of 105 responses to the staff survey and 182 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Hanna Miller, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

Peter Fry

Ofsted Inspector

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