

# Inspection of The Brier School

Bromley Lane, Kingswinford, West Midlands DY6 8QN

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Inspection dates:

14 and 15 February 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Outstanding**

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The quality of education

**Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Outstanding**

Early years provision

**Outstanding**

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

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

'Preparing for life – building on our strengths' is more than a school motto; it is the proven track record at The Brier. Parents, carers and staff combine to enrich the lives of a group of exceptional pupils.

Pupils have a broad range of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These needs could become long-term barriers to learning and life. However, this is a school where there are the highest expectations and where barriers are broken down. Consequently, pupils thrive as happy and confident learners ready for further education and life in modern Britain.

Staff work hard to ensure that pupils feel safe and valued and cherish every moment with them. Pupils are encouraged to develop friendships and take care of each other. Consequently, behaviour is positive in lessons and around the school. Leaders and staff closely monitor how the pupils interact together so that any potential cases of bullying can be dealt with quickly.

Preparing pupils for the world around them is a top priority. Pupils learn about the dangers in society and what to do when faced with them. Trips to the local post office or supermarkets and exciting residential trips enrich classroom learning. Work experiences and local college study opportunities promote personal ambition and aspirations.

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

These are exciting times at The Brier School. Since the last inspection, there have been several changes to the leadership team. Supported by a strong governing body, these leaders have brought a new and dynamic drive to the school. Leaders have addressed the issues from the last inspection with purpose. Consequently, learning is much better sequenced, and more pupils than ever are learning to read.

Leaders and teachers strive to ensure they accurately understand the additional needs of the pupils. Many pupils have communication needs. Others have conditions related to autism spectrum disorder or sensory processing needs. Whatever their needs, staff work hard to identify how this could affect the way pupils learn. Staff use this knowledge to put the right provision in place, such as Makaton signing, assisted language displays or picture exchange systems.

In all subjects, leaders have established clear expectations for what should be taught and when. Staff use these clear expectations and their training to implement lessons that help pupils to learn and remember more. Teachers carefully consider what pupils have learned to adapt the lesson to ensure no one falls behind. Consequently, pupils make strong progress across the curriculum. Subject leaders quickly act when they feel parts of the curriculum need to improve. For example, they are currently refining the curriculum for communication to provide extra clarity on how pupils should be taught to communicate.

When children arrive in the early years, staff work closely with parents, carers and early years services to understand what pre-school experiences have been like. Leaders know this group might have missed some early childhood experiences due to the pandemic. Consequently, staff work with parents to provide as many opportunities as possible to ensure any gaps are filled.

Leaders ensure that reading has a high profile in school. Since that last inspection, all staff have been trained and are experts in early reading. Expectations are high. There is a determination that all pupils will learn to read and love books. Inspectors spoke with some pupils who do not yet use spoken language to communicate. In these cases, pupils were excited by books and confident to share their favourite books.

Most pupils attend school regularly, and parents say that their children are eager to come to school in the morning. An enthusiasm for learning extends from children in the early years to the oldest pupils. Staff endeavour to understand when behaviour is challenging and put the right support in place. The pandemic affected the attendance of some pupils, and leaders are working to make sure that this group attends well.

Personal development is a real strength of the school. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum provides the basis for all opportunities. Raising donations for charities such as The Black Country Food Bank or Children in Need is closely linked to lessons in cultural awareness. An impressive range of school clubs, some after school, provide opportunities to build on such things as sporting ability.

Careers education starts with the pupils in primary years. It helps build the pupils' aspirations for what they could achieve over time. When pupils leave, they go on to further academic or vocational study. The oldest pupils go weekly to the local college to attend performing arts or animal care courses. This prepares them for when they leave The Brier to attend college.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff know that keeping pupils safe is their top priority. Leaders have trained staff well. As a result, staff know the signs that pupils might not be safe. Staff quickly pass on to leaders any concerns they have. Leaders are swift to investigate concerns and act promptly when needed.

Leaders are equally committed to helping pupils to develop protective behaviours to be safe in the wider world. At The Brier, safeguarding is about keeping pupils safe and doing as much as possible to keep them safe in the future. Regular lessons teach about stranger awareness and safe relationships.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	103878
<b>Local authority</b>	Dudley
<b>Inspection number</b>	10241046
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	175
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Paul Hill
<b>Headteacher</b>	David Stanton (Executive Headteacher)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.brier.dudley.sch.uk">www.brier.dudley.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	3 and 4 December 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, the headteacher is now the executive headteacher of both The Brier School and Woodsetton School
- Since the last inspection, there have been several changes to leaders. Two existing staff members took on the roles of deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher in September 2021. A second new deputy headteacher took up post in September 2021 and a second assistant headteacher in January 2023.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## 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.
- During the inspection, inspectors completed deep dives in the following subjects: communication, reading, mathematics, PSHE and physical development. In these subjects, they visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked with pupils and staff about how these subjects were taught. Inspectors also looked at other subjects in less detail to check how they were planned and taught.
- Inspectors asked pupils, staff, leaders and local academy board members about safeguarding arrangements. They scrutinised the employment checks on school staff and looked at other school records. They also found out about health and safety procedures and routines.
- Inspectors observed informal times to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- During the inspection, the inspectors had formal meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject teachers, governors, teachers and pupils. They also talked informally with parents, carers, transport escorts, drivers, pupils and staff to gather general information about school life.

### **Inspection team**

Chris Pollitt, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Johanne Clifton	Ofsted Inspector
Anna Vrahimi	His Majesty's Inspector

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