

Inspection of a good school: Broomhill Bank School

Broomhill Road, Rusthall, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN3 0TB

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 October 2023

Outcome

Broomhill Bank School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are openly proud of their school. They are forthright when explaining why they think it is a great place to be. Their disappointment at the delayed completion of new 'awesome' sports facilities (on both sites of the school) is intense. The palpable excitement generated by new dates for the project's completion is powerful testament to what this impressive and improving school means to them.

Pupils on each site of the school are equally positive about Broomhill. Despite the physical divide, this is very much one community with one vision. Ambitions are high. Students in the sixth form are looking to the future and motivated to be the best they can be. Expectations of what they can achieve continue to rise. Staff want the best outcomes for all, no matter what the barriers for individual pupils are.

The school's pastoral care is strong. Pupils behave well because expectations are clear. Pupils contribute positively when defining and promoting the school's values. This is impressive when the context of the school is considered. They feel safe and 'understood' by staff. Importantly, pupils think that the school is getting better all the time. Inspectors agree.

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

The school's curriculum is ever evolving. It meets the needs of all pupils well because staff are reflective and open to change when it is needed. Pupils who are disadvantaged do equally well here. All benefit from three flexible pathways through the curriculum. These are not rigid. Staff constantly review the progress that pupils are making and make adjustments when required. Pupils' achievements ensure that they gain a range of appropriate qualifications to support successful next steps on leaving the school.

Students in the sixth form thrive because of the positive learning culture. One student's sentiment that this is the best school she has ever been to is shared by many. Inspectors' classroom visits on both sites of the school revealed positive and supportive relationships.

The impact of the drive to raise expectations since the last inspection is clear to see. Inspectors' focus on how well mathematics and English are taught showed that pupils are making at least good progress through their individual pathways. Pupils who arrive at the school who struggle to read are also supported well. The same positive impression was created by the school's art and design programme of study, with high-quality work being produced over a wide range of areas covered by the subject.

Classrooms are happy places. Staff are successful in supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most teachers are skilled at delivering lessons that challenge and inspire. They use a range of strategies, including well-directed questions and appropriately targeted humour, to motivate and engage pupils. Most staff adjust and adapt their teaching when needed. However, some are less attuned to pupils' needs 'in the moment' and do not move learning on enough when opportunities arise. When this happens, the pace of learning slows. Additionally, on occasion, pupils are less clear about what they are learning and why. When this is the case, pupils' knowledge and understanding are not supported or progressing as consistently as they could be.

Pupils' personal development has a high priority here. The school's 'preparation for life' motto is realised through a wide range of opportunities and enrichment activities. Some of these are delivered through the school's personal, social and health education programme. However, much is delivered in bespoke packages for individuals or small groups of pupils. Pupils' understanding of equalities and different cultures and religions is supported well. One striking aspect that came across when inspectors spoke to groups of pupils was their clear understanding of how their own actions and reactions impact on others. Older pupils in particular know that they have an important role in promoting the school's values and actively contributing to day-to-day school life. This is equally true over both sites of the school.

Staff enjoy working here. The confidential staff survey showed overwhelming positivity for the support they get from leaders. Additionally, the large majority of parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, are positive about the school.

The school is successful at developing leadership at all levels. This includes across both curriculum and pastoral provision. Improvement planning is effective because self-evaluation of the school's strengths and areas to develop is reflective and honest. Governors know the school well. They are not afraid to ask difficult questions when they need to. The impact of this is a solidly good school that is improving rapidly.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, staff are not dynamic enough in adapting their teaching to move learning on quickly when pupils are ready. On other occasions, pupils are unclear about the key things that staff want them to learn. This means that the fine balance between consolidating pupils' understanding and moving their learning on is not always as effective as it could be. When this is the case, pupils' learning slows. Leaders are aware of this. They should redouble their efforts to ensure that all staff are consistent in delivering the curriculum and that all opportunities for pupils to make the excellent progress they are capable of are fully exploited.

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 school to be good in March 2018.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	119026
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10287931
Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	358
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	67
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Steve Grice
Headteacher	Steven Ackerley (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.broomhillbank.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	6 and 7 March 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is situated on two sites. Broomhill Bank West is in Tunbridge Wells, and Broomhill Bank North is approximately 20 miles away in Hextable. The site at Broomhill Bank North contains residential accommodation for up to 16 pupils.
- The school caters for pupils with autism spectrum disorder and speech, language and communication needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan and are placed at the school by local authorities.
- The school is led by an executive headteacher, with dedicated heads of school for each of the school's two sites.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school does not currently use alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- 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.
- This was an aligned inspection that took place at the same time as an inspection of the school's residential provision.
- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings with leaders at all levels, as well as with teaching and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body, who was accompanied by two other governors. He also talked on the telephone to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of parents, leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour, the school's wider curriculum offer and how leaders support staff with their workload.
- Pupils were talked to throughout the inspection to gain their views about the school. Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted through Ofsted Parent View. The views of staff were also considered through Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sue Bzikot

Ofsted Inspector

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