

# Inspection of a good school: Bardwell School

Hendon Place, Sunderland Drive, Bicester, Oxfordshire OX26 4RZ

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Inspection dates:

1 and 2 November 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 school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Julie Foot. This school is part of The Gallery Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Kay Willett MBE, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Chris Scrivener.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils are happy and enjoy school. They like the nurturing and caring approach provided by staff. Pupils explain that they feel secure. They have trusted adults they can talk to if they have any worries. Many pupils say that the best thing about school is their friends.

Most pupils behave well. However, a few pupils sometimes find it hard to regulate their behaviour and emotions. The school has established a calm and purposeful environment. This helps pupils to feel safe. Bullying is rare and the school acts quickly if there are any concerns.

The school's high expectations for every pupil are not yet fully realised because curriculum development is still underway. It is inconsistently designed and implemented. As a result, pupils currently do not achieve as well as they could across different subjects.

The school provides many activities that help to advance pupils' self-confidence and independence. For example, pupils develop their understanding of money when visiting the local shops. The school provides many residential trips, such as to Wales and the Isle of Wight. These trips are very popular and help pupils to develop their sporting skills such as fencing, canoeing and rock climbing.

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

The curriculum is ambitious and well designed in some subjects. For example, in physical education, pupils are helped to develop their stamina, coordination and spatial awareness. Some other subjects are not as well developed. These subjects do not contain enough detail about the key skills and knowledge that pupils need to learn. This means that progress slows as pupils do not consistently build on their existing knowledge and understanding well enough over time. For example, there is no clear step-by-step development of mathematical knowledge and concepts. This impacts how well pupils can solve real-life problems related to measurement and time.

Pupils have many diverse learning needs, but the school's ambition to meet these is not fully realised in practice. Staff design tasks that do not consistently support pupils to learn the curriculum. This is because staff do not have the required subject knowledge to ensure that activities are focused on what pupils need to learn. As a result, pupils have gaps in their learning. Staff use suitable checks to review pupils' understanding, but they do not make routine use of this information to inform future teaching. The school works well with external experts to check how well pupils are achieving against their education, health and care (EHC) plan targets.

The school is successful in meeting the range of pupils' wider needs. The environment in the early years is calm and happy. It supports the sensory needs of children well. In the sixth-form provision, the curriculum is ambitious and prepares students well for their future lives by providing many opportunities in the real world to develop their confidence and independence. Students receive appropriate careers information, advice and guidance. The school provides students with varied experiences to prepare them for the future. For example, sixth-form students regularly assist in a charity café.

Pupils develop their communication skills well. Those who need it are taught to engage effectively with appropriate technology. This enables pupils to communicate with increasing fluency and clarity. Leaders prioritise the development of pupils' early reading skills. Many pupils in the school enjoy engaging with books and using the school library. Staff have been well trained to teach phonics. The reading curriculum is carefully planned to enable pupils to gain the knowledge and skills they need to become confident readers.

Most pupils behave well and low-level disruption is rare. However, a few pupils find it hard to stay in class as they struggle to manage their emotions. Changes to the behaviour procedures have caused confusion amongst staff and parents. Some parents are concerned about how behaviour is managed and some staff do not follow the school procedures to manage behaviour. A new approach is being introduced to help everyone understand behaviour expectations. Other parents are concerned about a range of other matters including staffing and communication. The school is working to address these concerns and involve parents more positively in pupils' education.

The curriculum to promote pupils' personal development has a high priority. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They understand concepts such as democracy through elections to the school council. Pupils take part in appropriate relationships, sex and health education. The school designs activities that successfully develop pupils'

interests and talents, such as in sport. The after-school club called 'Branch-Out' provides many pupils with a range of exciting activities. Recently, pupils completed painting a wall mural depicting the school's values.

Staffing turbulence has slowed improvements, but the school knows what needs to be done to improve the provision for pupils. Staff have mixed views about the support they are given. Some feel well supported. Others feel that, when decisions are made, the school does not think carefully enough about how this will impact on their teaching.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Staff do not have a consistent understanding of the new behaviour procedures. This means that, at times, pupils are not supported appropriately. The school should prioritise staff training and ensure that robust procedures are followed to support pupils to regulate their behaviour. The school should also strengthen its communication to parents about its approach to managing behaviour.
- In some subjects, the school has not mapped out the key content it intends pupils to learn. This means that pupils' learning is variable across different subjects. The school should ensure that it precisely identifies the most important knowledge and skills that pupils will learn across the curriculum.
- The curriculum is not consistently implemented. This hinders pupils' learning. The school should ensure that staff are equipped with expert subject knowledge to design tasks that focus on the most important content that staff intend pupils to learn. The school should also support staff to accurately check pupils' understanding and use this information to inform future teaching.

## **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 predecessor school, Bardwell School, to be good in September 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	146683
<b>Local authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10288072
<b>Type of school</b>	All-through
<b>School category</b>	Academy special converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	114
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	20
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Chris Scrivener
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Kay Willett MBE
<b>Headteacher</b>	Julie Foot
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.bardwell.oxon.sch.uk">www.bardwell.oxon.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Bardwell School converted to become an academy school in June 2019. When its predecessor school, Bardwell School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school caters for pupils with SEND, including autism and severe learning difficulties. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school has provision for two-year-olds in its nursery. The nursery is sited on the school campus in a separate building. There are currently no two-year-old children attending.
- The school runs an after-school provision on site called Branch-Out.
- The school currently uses one unregistered alternative provider.

- Since the school opened in 2019, there have been several changes in leadership and to staffing. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2022. Currently, the deputy chief executive officer of the trust works at the school site for two days a week.
- The school has expanded over recent years. This expansion has been in response to the growing need in the local authority for special school places for pupils. Several new members of staff have been appointed in response to the school's expansion.
- 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.

## 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.
- Inspectors spoke with the chief executive officer of the trust, the deputy chief executive officer, senior leaders, teachers and other staff, trustees and a member of the local governance board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in: communication and early reading, mathematics, personal, social and health education, and physical development. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; considered the views of leaders, staff, parents 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 reviewed a range of school documentation relating to the work of the school. They also observed behaviour in lessons and around the school and talked to pupils about their views.
- Inspectors took into account the views of parents, including discussions with some parents, reviewed letters and Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff and reviewed the staff survey.

## Inspection team

Liz Bowes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Louise Ling

Ofsted Inspector

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