

# Inspection of a good school: Bearbrook Combined School

Fowler Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP19 7QP

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Inspection dates:

13 and 14 December 2023

## Outcome

Bearbrook Combined School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Marcus Faulkner. This school is part of the Great Learners Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the interim chief executive officer, Lorraine Greco and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Peter Westaway (Interim).

## What is it like to attend this school?

Everyone is welcomed with a huge smile at Bearbrook. Pupils are 'ready, safe and respectful'. Pupils are proud of the welcoming environment at this school. They say teachers are kind and supportive. They feel well cared for, and they are. Bullying and poor behaviour are rare. Pupils follow the high expectations set by adults. In the rare instances of bullying, teachers promptly address the issue, and it stops.

All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are encouraged to become independent and confident learners. Older pupils relish the opportunities to show their leadership skills in one of the many roles they can take on, such as: a prefect, an ambassador or peer mentor. Pupils from across the school make a difference to the school and wider community through their membership of the school council or eco-committee.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils' achievement and have created an ambitious curriculum for all pupils. While these expectations are realised for most pupils in most subjects, the school continues to work on the curriculum, so that all pupils are able to achieve the very best outcomes in all subjects.

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

The school's curriculum is ambitious for all pupils, including those with SEND. Pupils learn and enjoy a broad range of subjects. The school has rightly focused on improving pupils' outcomes in reading and mathematics. Leaders have focused on making sure learning is well planned and sequenced, and that learning activities link to the gaps they have highlighted. For example, regular, structured calculation work helps pupils develop their mathematical fluency. Work to further develop other curriculum areas is well underway. In

most subjects, leaders have identified the skills they want pupils to learn and the order they should learn them in. However, how pupils will learn other subject-specific knowledge as they move through the school is not always as clear.

The school has an unrelenting focus on developing pupils' communication and language skills. Right from pre-school, adults seamlessly model play and language, supporting children to grow and use an expanding vocabulary. Leaders recognise this is key to opening up horizons for the pupils. Alongside this, reading is prioritised. High-quality texts are selected to support pupils' understanding of the topics they learn. The books pupils enjoy listening to have been carefully chosen to reflect the diversity of the school.

Children start learning to read right from the start of pre-school. Here, children enjoy listening to and joining in with familiar stories, songs and rhymes. From Reception onwards, children learn and practise the letters and sounds they need to learn to read. Adults are well trained to teach phonics. They identify those who fall behind and quickly give them the support needed to catch up, and most do. Leaders have strengthened the reading curriculum for older pupils to help them become confident, fluent readers.

In lessons, teachers actively check and clarify pupils' understanding, especially in well-thought-out subjects like mathematics. Pupils' enjoyment of mathematics begins in early years, where they delight in recognising numbers, counting, and identifying shapes. In later years, pupils appreciate teachers' step-by-step guidance, aiding their learning. However, in some other subjects, leaders have not yet thought out how to check pupils understanding. This means, sometimes, pupils have gaps in their knowledge, which can mean they find it more difficult to remember new concepts.

Pupils with SEND benefit from thoughtfully planned activities. Most learn alongside their peers in class. This works well because teachers have excellent knowledge about pupils with SEND and how to meet their learning needs successfully. Adults are skilful at providing just the right amount of support at the right time to enable pupils to be successful.

Pupils learn about positive relationships and to accept and celebrate each other's differences. They get along together well. Their behaviour in lessons and when moving around the school is excellent. Knowledgeable staff effectively support any pupils who sometimes struggle to manage their own behaviour.

Improving pupils' attendance and punctuality is a high priority for the school. Leaders work hard to build positive relationships with families to help them overcome any barriers they may have. Events such as 'Family Fridays' help build these relationships. Parents are invited in to find out about pupils' learning. They are also able to meet other professionals who provide support to promote good attendance, when this is needed.

Staff, including those new to their career, are proud to work at Bearbrook. They are well supported by leaders within the school and trust. Staff speak positively about leaders prioritising the mental health and well-being of both staff and pupils. The trust and the governing body offer a good balance of support and challenge to school leaders. They

know the school well and have a good understanding of what the school needs to do to help pupils achieve the best possible outcomes.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- In some subjects, leaders have not sequenced the exact knowledge pupils need to learn well enough. This means that learning activities do not build on pupils' previous knowledge consistently well. Leaders must ensure the specific knowledge pupils must learn, and its timing, is identified to ensure a clear progression in learning.
- In some subjects, teachers are not always carefully checking what pupils have learned before moving on to new topics and concepts. As a result, pupils find it more difficult to connect new concepts with their prior knowledge and, therefore, they do not learn as much as they could. Leaders need to provide teachers with appropriate training and support to ensure they check what pupils know and remember as they build their knowledge across the school's curriculum.

## **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, Bearbrook Combined school to be good in February 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](#)' 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>	147242
<b>Local authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10296450
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	457
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Peter Westaway (interim)
<b>CEO of trust</b>	Lorraine Greco (interim)
<b>Headteacher</b>	Marcus Faulkner
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.bearbrookschool.co.uk">www.bearbrookschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Bearbrook Combined School converted to become an academy school in July 2019. When its predecessor school, Bearbrook Combined School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is part of the Great Learners Trust.
- The school has a breakfast and after-school club run by a private provider.
- The school has a nursery (pre-school) class for two-year-old to four-year-old children.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

## 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 has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with the senior leadership team, members of staff, and three members of the governing body.
- The inspector met with leaders from the Great Learners Trust, including three trustees, the interim chief executive officer and a representative from the education improvement team.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of 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.
- The inspector considered the 57 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and parents' written responses.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, and history. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector also looked at pupils' books, curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- The inspector looked at the school's own evaluation and development plans.

### **Inspection team**

Clare Haines, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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