

Inspection of a good school: Bents Green School

Ringinglow Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S11 7TB

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 February 2024

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.

What is it like to attend this school?

Bents Green School is a place where individual pupils matter. The school knows each pupil well. It works with parents and carers to remove barriers to pupils' learning and ensures that pupils with complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) progress well. The school is split across three sites in different areas of Sheffield. Pupils attend the provision that is best matched to support their SEND and individual needs. Some pupils attend a provision in a secondary school. This is for a small number of pupils who are able to access mainstream education.

Pupils are supportive of each other. They are polite and friendly. They show respect towards others. Leaders have high expectations for what pupils can achieve. The school is re-developing the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils more fully. This includes the approaches to phonics and reading. The school is strengthening the personal development and wider curriculum offer. Pupils follow several learning pathways. These pathways are designed to meet pupils' specific SEND. Some curriculum pathways are more developed than others.

Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They attend well. They progress to post-16 provision in school or follow training and education programmes that meet their needs and interests when they leave. This is a calm school. Staff address any misbehaviour or bullying in a swift and nurturing manner. This helps pupils to understand their own behaviour and learn positive ways to conduct themselves.

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

The development of pupils' phonic knowledge and reading skills is at a transition point. The school does not have a consistent strategy for teaching phonics and reading, including for staff professional development. The school has started to introduce a new

reading scheme. It is replacing older phonics and reading approaches to better meet pupils' needs. Pupils engage well with these lessons. They are keen to read in class and to visitors. However, a minority of staff are trained in the new phonics scheme. Leaders have correctly identified that some teachers' confidence varies when teaching pupils to read. Leaders recognise the need for greater consistency in approach across the school.

Pupils follow a pathway model of learning, designed to meet pupils' individual SEND. Most pathways offer a broad curriculum. Some are more developed than others. In most subjects, the school has organised the curriculum carefully, but this is not always evidenced clearly in lessons. However, pupils engage with learning positively. Pupils in the 'The Hub' follow the mainstream school's curriculum. They learn in mainstream lessons with the support of Bents Green School staff. These pupils feel fully included in the life of the mainstream school.

One school site has more pupils than it has comfortable room for. Some classes require maintenance and modernisation. Some areas of the school are inaccessible to pupils with physical disabilities. However, pupils behave well. Across school sites, pupils respond to staff positively. When pupils lose focus, staff swiftly intervene. Staff are calm and patient. This ensures that pupils' behaviour does not escalate. Most pupils feel safe in school. Leaders have invested time and resources to develop a positive school climate. The school records behaviour incidents clearly, including details of staff actions and any follow up. There is a downward trend of negative behaviour despite the increasing number of pupils joining the school.

Aspects of personal development lack coherence. The school has not clearly linked pupils' personal development between pathways. Some teachers lack the knowledge they need to teach elements of personal development effectively. Some pupils have a less well-developed understanding of risks and how to recognise them. They do not have a consistently strong understanding of the risks that they face in the community. In contrast, most have a better understanding of the risks they may face while using technology. Most pupils understand consent and appropriate touch well.

Staff feel supported by leaders. They receive regular professional development, including safeguarding updates. Staff feel that their workload is purposeful. Leaders ensure staff have sufficient information to support pupils with complex SEND effectively. Early career teachers feel well supported. They receive appropriate time to prepare lessons and develop their teaching practice. Governors recognise that aspects of the school's work need to improve. They understand that the sharp increase in pupil numbers has been a challenge to the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not have a consistent strategy to teach phonics and reading, including staff professional development. Lessons lack consistency. This means that some pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. The school should implement a consistent phonics scheme and should continue to develop teachers' confidence and practice.
- Some curriculum pathways are less developed than others. This means the development of pupils' knowledge is less strong in some subject areas than others. The school should strengthen the curriculum to ensure all subjects and lessons are ambitious and that teachers have a good knowledge of the range of subjects and courses that they teach.
- The school's approach to pupils' personal development lacks coherence. Personal development is not clearly linked between learning pathways. This results in gaps in provision and some pupils' development. Staff lack the necessary training to deliver some elements of personal development effectively. The school should strengthen its personal development curriculum, including staff training, to ensure all pupils experience a rich and varied wider curriculum offer.
- Some pupils lack a secure understanding of the risks that they may face in the community. This means that they may not fully understand ways to keep themselves safe. The school should ensure all pupils develop a stronger understanding of the risks they may face to better prepare them for adulthood.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in July 2014.

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	107169
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	10297201
Type of school	Special
School category	Community 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	302
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	37
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Laura Gillespie
Headteacher	Aileen Hosty and Laura Rzepinski
Website	www.bentsgreenschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	25 September 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Bents Green School is a special school for pupils aged between 11 and 19 years. It is based across three sites.
- One provision, called 'The Hub', is at Westfield School in Sheffield. This is for up to 20 pupils who follow a mainstream curriculum. There are 12 pupils who currently attend the provision.
- The co-headteachers have been in post since April 2023.
- The number of pupils on the school roll has doubled since the last graded inspection.
- Pupils join the school throughout the academic year.
- The school makes provision for pupils with autism and communication and interaction SEND. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Some pupils attend lessons at alternative education providers. They remain single registered at Bents Green School.

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 had 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 met with the co-headteachers, members of the senior leadership team, SENCo, curriculum leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body.
- The lead inspector spoke by telephone to a representative of Learn Sheffield, a school improvement company that works with the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, and personal, social and health education. 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. The provision for teaching reading was also closely scrutinised.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: 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 lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans.
- Inspectors looked at a range of information regarding behaviour. They observed the behaviour of pupils in classrooms and at social times.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils, staff and parents. This included any free-text responses to Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

David Mills, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Claire Leech

Ofsted Inspector

David Penny

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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