

Inspection of Bitterne Park School

Dimond Road, Bitterne Park, Southampton, Hampshire SO18 1BU

Inspection dates: 8 to 9 May 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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| The quality of education | Good |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Good |
| Personal development | Good |
| Leadership and management | Good |
| Sixth-form provision | Good |
| Previous inspection grade | Good |

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including those in the sixth form, describe the school as a 'close community' where 'teachers really care for us'. Pupils feel happy and safe because they know that staff listen and help when they have concerns.

Pupils typically behave and communicate respectfully in lessons, at social times and as they move around the school. This is testament to staff's hard work to embed the school's high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Bullying is not common and any instances are dealt with well.

Some highly bespoke provisions within the school support the needs of vulnerable pupils and those who need to improve their behaviour, attendance or attitudes to learning. Pupils with autism in the 'ARB' specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (specially resourced provision) thrive emotionally, socially and academically.

Leaders have reshaped the curriculum to ensure that it is ambitious for all. Training and support for teachers to realise these ambitions is ongoing as new approaches to adapt teaching to meet all pupils' needs are embedded. The school's work is making a positive difference. Pupils are typically learning more and remembering more of what they are taught.

Pupils are encouraged to pursue their talents, such as in football, poetry and music. The announcement of this year's school production caused much excitement during the inspection.

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

Leaders have made some significant improvements to the school which are helping pupils get back on track after the pandemic. In particular, some pupils who struggle with reading receive expert help to fill gaps in their phonics knowledge. This is helping pupils catch up with their peers. However, sometimes, expectations for pupils' writing, spelling and punctuation are not as high as they could be and pupils' misconceptions are not always addressed.

Since the pandemic, the school has raised its ambitions for pupils by reorganising the structure of the overall school curriculum. Pupils now study a three-year key stage 3. At key stage 4, more pupils choose the suite of qualifications that make up the English Baccalaureate. Pupils appreciate the wide range of subjects they can choose to study at key stages 4 and 5. Staff help pupils to choose appropriate courses for them, regardless of the impact that these choices have on the school's published outcomes. This includes a range of vocational courses that tap into pupils' interests and help to prepare them for their future lives and work.

Last year, the school's published outcomes were lower than expected. Leaders and governors have rigorously reviewed the reasons for this. Rightly, some significant

changes have been made. In some subjects, the content of what pupils are taught and the order in which they are taught it has been reviewed. Currently, the school is making sure that the high ambition of what has been planned is taught consistently well. In particular, there is a more consistent approach to checking pupils' learning. Staff are enthusiastic about the training they are receiving. This is helping them to adapt teaching to meet pupils' specific learning needs. As a result, ambition for current pupils is raised. Pupils are typically learning more of the curriculum.

Since the last inspection, the school has successfully made improvements to pupils' behaviour. Pupils appreciate that their views were taken into consideration as changes were made to how the school operates. For example, the additional time to move between lessons means that change-over times are now calm and pupils arrive at their classes ready to learn. Although suspensions have risen as pupils adjust to the new behaviour policy, well-thought-through procedures are in place to reduce this. Should pupils' behaviour fall short of leaders' high expectations, leaders and staff use a variety of methods to carefully support pupils to understand how to get things right.

Pupils' regular attendance and good behaviour remain a top priority. The school is doing much to help pupils attend school more regularly. In particular, support for the most vulnerable pupils is impressive. A raft of highly bespoke approaches are helping pupils to overcome their anxieties, manage their behaviour or improve their attendance. For example, pupils who spend time learning in 'the Ferns' appreciate the calm, nurturing environment which supports their social, emotional and mental health needs. Those in the 'ALPs' credit the school for helping them get back on track when they have struggled to maintain positive behaviour.

Leaders also prioritise pupils' personal development. Pupils are taught how they can embody the school's new values of 'respect', 'believe' and 'achieve'. In the ARB, pupils are helped to prepare for their current and future lives, including how to eat healthily and how to travel independently.

The small, inclusive sixth form offers a bespoke range of courses to meet students' needs and interests. Careers education is especially strong in the sixth form. Students, including students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are very well prepared and supported to identify their next steps and destinations, be that an apprenticeship, work or university.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise their reading and writing. Sometimes, approaches to structuring writing are inconsistent across the

school or do not enable pupils to achieve as highly as they could. This hinders the achievement of some pupils. The school needs to make sure that pupils are given enough opportunities to read and write across the curriculum in a well-coordinated way.

- Sometimes, teaching does not adapt to pupils' individual learning needs well enough. This means that some pupils do not understand what they are meant to learn as well as they could. Some others are not challenged highly enough. The school needs to embed approaches to adaptive teaching so that the achievement of all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the most able pupils, is raised.

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

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| Unique reference number | 116458 |
| Local authority | Southampton |
| Inspection number | 10296240 |
| Type of school | Secondary comprehensive |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 2,020 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 140 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Matt Bishop |
| Headteacher | Stewart Roderick |
| Website | www.bitterneparkschool.org.uk |
| Dates of previous inspection | 17 to 18 January 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. |

Information about this school

- The school currently uses six alternative provisions to provide education and support for a small number of pupils. In addition, the school has its own alternative provision on site called 'ALPS'. This provides short-term provision for a small number of pupils.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with autism called 'The ARB'. The local authority has currently placed 48 pupils in this provision.
- 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 is part of REACH Community Trust, a cooperative trust in Southampton.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met with a group of governors, representatives from the local authority and a school improvement adviser commissioned by the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history and geography and also explored the curriculum and teaching in some vocational subjects (criminology and health and social care). 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 visited a further selection of tutor times and lessons, including those being taught to small groups. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and spoke with additional pupils about their learning across a range of subjects.
- Inspectors visited the 'ALPS' and 'Fern' provisions. They discussed the provisions with leaders, visited lessons and talked with pupils about their experiences in the provisions.
- The lead inspector visited the ARB specially resourced provision. She discussed the provision with leaders, visited lessons and talked with pupils about their learning and preparation for adulthood.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of school policies, records and evaluations, including records about pupils' behaviour, safety and attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, pupils, staff and a representative from the local authority; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors met with a group of early career teachers and several staff and considered the responses submitted to the confidential staff survey.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils submitted to the confidential pupil survey, met with several groups of pupils to discuss their views and experiences of the school and spoke with pupils at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and the associated free-text comments.

Inspection team

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