

Inspection of Darrick Wood School

Lovibonds Avenue, Orpington, Kent BR6 8ER

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 May 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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

The headteacher of this school is Dr Martin Airey. Darrick Wood School is the only school in Darrick Wood Academy Trust. It is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Wilcox.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils enjoy school and get a lot out of the experiences it provides. This, combined with the school's high expectations, is one of the reasons why pupils' academic and personal development is strong. This includes in the sixth form, where students produce high-quality work.

Pupils' behaviour is mostly good in lessons and around the school. There are a few interruptions to lessons caused by silly behaviour. The behaviour of a small number of pupils is challenging and this results in some minor disruption to the school's otherwise calm atmosphere. In most cases, the school deals with this well. The school's approach means that pupils' behaviour improves considerably as they get older.

The school manages bullying appropriately. Some pupils and parents expressed concerns about bullying and behaviour. Bullying does happen but most pupils are confident that staff will resolve matters. However, a minority of those pupils who responded to the survey felt this was not the case. Much of the school's work to deal with bullying goes on in the background because issues can be more complex than first meets the eye. Sometimes, the school does not make pupils and parents appropriately aware of the positive impact of this aspect of its work.

Pupils and students enjoy greatly the extensive range of activities, clubs and trips provided by the school. These extend the already ambitious curriculum, and aim to help pupils to become responsible adults and be prepared for the next stage of their lives.

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

The school's uniqueness lies in its wide curriculum and inclusivity. These two features are inextricably linked. Both help to ensure that pupils gain experiences and opportunities that they might not otherwise get.

The design of the curriculum means that pupils continue to study a broad range of subjects as they move up the school. In Years 10 and 11, for example, all subjects can be studied to GCSE. This includes religious studies, drama, dance, physical education, art, and design and technology, as well the humanities subjects. In addition, subjects such as business education are available. The personal, social and health education programme covers both careers and sex and relationships and health education effectively. Pupils attain well in their GCSEs. In the sixth form, the range of subjects remains extensive, and results at A level and in vocational examinations are strong.

The curriculum covers the essential learning that underpins each subject. Opportunities to repeat important topics enable pupils to use their knowledge confidently and build on what they already know. For example, in mathematics and languages, knowledge is built up logically, bit by bit. In English, the emphasis on

reading a range of texts ensures that pupils become assured readers. Complex ideas are explained carefully, including in the sixth form, where students often produce high-quality work. Here, the quality of students' learning benefits hugely from the expertise of staff.

Despite these strengths, some of the techniques to support learning are not having the desired impact on pupils' achievements. This is particularly the case in Years 7 to 9. The school's focus on checking pupils' understanding, for example, is sometimes not used effectively to adapt teaching. As a result, the learning of pupils lower down the school is not as strong as in Years 10 to 13.

Inclusion is at the heart of the school and evident in the way that all pupils are welcomed, whatever their aptitude or need. This includes admitting pupils who may have previously struggled with mainstream schooling, often due to their additional needs. This can make managing safeguarding and behaviour demanding. The school is vigilant about safeguarding and follows up identified needs diligently, including pupils' absence from school. As a result, attendance is strong. Sometimes, the revamped behaviour policy is not implemented consistently. This results in a smattering of lessons where silly behaviour interrupts learning. Nevertheless, taking everything together, pupils' behaviour improves, especially for those who find self-regulation difficult.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive a good deal. The proportion of pupils with SEND has risen in recent years. To respond to this, the school has beefed up its approaches to help ensure that all pupils achieve to the best of their capabilities. Pupils' needs are identified accurately and the range of additional help provided, including in-class support, has a positive impact on their learning. Pupils who attend the deaf centre are supported particularly well. They all attend lessons in the main school, with staff helping to ensure that they get the same experience as others.

The extensive range of activities, events and trips available to pupils does much to extend their understanding of the wider world. Examples include geography field trips, visits to theatres and the First World War battlefields. The wide range of lunchtime and after-school activities, including sport, music and drama, are well attended.

Leaders and governors take teachers' workload and well-being seriously. For example, teachers said that the opportunity to exercise their professional autonomy was a big help. Those responsible for governance work effectively in order to support the school, and structured visits help to ensure that they have the knowledge to hold it to account.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Although the school has developed its approach to the curriculum, and introduced new methods to improve further pupils' learning, there are times when some of the chosen techniques are not having the desired impact on pupils' achievements. The school needs to ensure that well-targeted professional development is used to extend teachers' pedagogical skills and knowledge so that the curriculum is implemented with greater consistency.
- The school's revised behaviour policy is not implemented consistently well, especially in the lower years. In a few lessons, silly behaviour interrupts learning. The school needs to ensure that everyone has the skills and knowledge to manage behaviour effectively. This includes strengthening staff's understanding of the policy and its implications for their everyday practice.

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 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	136355
Local authority	Bromley
Inspection number	10323366
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
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	1,713
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	410
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of Trust	David Wilcox
Headteacher	Dr Martin Airey
Website	www.darrickwood.bromley.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	15 to 16 January 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Darrick Wood School is a larger-than-average secondary academy in the London Borough of Bromley.
- There is a hearing impairment resource provision at the school. This is managed by the local authority. All pupils who receive support from the provision are fully integrated into the school.
- There are no pupils currently attending alternative 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.

Information about this inspection

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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, art and design, history, drama and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and, where possible, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work.
- Inspectors also looked at the curriculum and visited some other subjects, including science, modern languages and computing.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors met with those responsible for governance, including trustees, the chair of the governing body and other governors. Inspectors spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector considered 470 responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys.
- 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.

Inspection team

Brian Oppenheim, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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Joseph Sparks	Ofsted Inspector
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