

# Inspection of Brandles School

Weston Way, Baldock, Hertfordshire SG7 6EY

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Inspection dates: 4 and 5 June 2024

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Paul Smith. The school is part of the Larwood Multi-Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for the running of the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Dan Login. There is also an executive headteacher, Pierre van der Merwe, who is responsible for this school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Staff at Brandles understand how to cater for the needs of pupils who attend the school. Each pupil receives a warm welcome as they arrive. Pupils have time for breakfast and a chance to be calm before the start of the school day. Staff make checks on pupils' welfare and their feelings. It allows them to make adjustments to the curriculum to meet pupils' needs. This helps pupils to be ready to learn.

Pupils work hard to aspire to the school values, 'ready, respectful and safe'. It provides them with a simple approach of how they should behave at school. Relationships between adults and pupils are positive. They support the high expectations the school has for pupils' conduct and attitudes to learning. Pupils know that they can share any concerns. Adults will help to resolve them. Staff understand how to provide sensitive support if pupils misbehave. Calm voices and gentle persuasion help pupils to manage their emotions and re-engage in learning.

Pupils enjoy different opportunities for hands-on learning. They learn how to mend scooters and bikes. They use the outdoors to develop bushcraft and horticultural skills.

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

The school has carefully considered the design of the curriculum. Learning plans are bespoke to meet pupils' academic and personal needs. All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Many pupils have previous negative experiences of education. The school ensures that pupils receive an appropriate balance of support to help re-ignite pupils' love of learning. For example, 'The Hive' accommodates pupils who take longer to settle at school. Smaller classes and targeted therapies contribute well to their re-integration into school life.

Pupils are well prepared for their next stages of education. They study a range of subjects. For older pupils, it often leads to gaining qualifications and national awards. This helps prepare them well for their next stages in education. Curriculum road maps provide broad themes and topics to ensure coverage of key concepts in each subject. Most subjects include detailed steps that help pupils build their knowledge. However, a few subjects do not apply the same precision. This means pupils do not progress quickly enough on to harder work in those subjects.

Reading is an important part of the curriculum. All relevant staff have received phonics training and use sensible strategies to support any pupil who struggles to read. This ensures that they can access the curriculum. There is a positive approach to instilling a love for books and reading in general. This includes visits to the library, which have inspired some pupils to engage in reading texts beyond those identified by their teachers.

The school places a high importance on pupils' preparation for life beyond Brandles. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to promote the building of their character. Adventurous activities such as kayaking, or paddle boarding develop pupils' confidence and resilience. Pupils develop interests through lunchtime clubs. They learn about responsibility through representing the school in sporting competitions or helping in the local community. Themed days promote pupils' understanding of difference. Tutorial sessions allow pupils to express opinions about local and national issues. Pupils benefit from a well-structured programme of careers advice. They meet different external providers to help inform them about future workplace opportunities.

Through the work of the school, pupils soon rediscover their willingness to learn. They are attentive in class. Staff quickly spot if a pupil becomes anxious. They help them to make the right choices for their behaviour. Pupils' neat presentation of work reflects the pride in their achievements. The school is taking action about different ways to promote regular attendance. Their actions are starting to pay off. However, there are still too many pupils who do not attend school regularly.

The trust has had recent change in personnel. New members are strongly focused on the success and work of the school. The trust has invested in the school's building and environment. Their monitoring helps to check the actions of school leaders. Staff value the support they receive for their professional development. A strong team ethic helps the school to achieve its ambitions for pupils.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- In a few subjects, the curriculum plans do not identify the precise knowledge pupils need to build a deep knowledge of that subject. This means staff are unable to help pupils to progress as well as they should. The school should ensure that all subject plans include the key information, such as how pupils' knowledge will build, so that pupils make the strongest progress possible.
- Some pupils do not attend school regularly. This means that they are missing important learning which has a negative impact upon their academic and personal education. The school should continue to work with pupils and their families to overcome any barriers that prevents them from attending more frequently.

## 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>	147679
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10323794
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	70
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Dan Login
<b>Headteacher</b>	Paul Smith
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.brandles.herts.sch.uk">www.brandles.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date(s) of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Brandles School is part of the Larwood trust which consists of one other special school. The school opened as a new member of the trust in February 2020.
- The current headteacher was made the substantive headteacher in January 2022.
- All pupils who attend the school have a diagnosed need of social, emotional and mental health.
- The school makes use of two unregistered alternative education providers.
- 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

The inspector(s) carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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.
- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and teachers and support staff.
- An inspector spoke with three members of the trust including the chair of trustees. An inspector also spoke with the school's chosen school improvement partner.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, physical education which included outdoor education and food technology. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, teaching assistants, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in other subjects; computing and drama.
- 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.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents through their responses to the online survey, Parent View and parents' free-text comments. There were no responses to the staff and pupil surveys. Inspectors spoke to staff and pupils during the course of the inspection.

### **Inspection team**

Steve Mellors, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Mary Abeyasekera

Ofsted Inspector

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