

Inspection of a good school: The Brakenhale School

Rectory Lane, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 7BA

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 May 2024

Outcome

The Brakenhale School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Camilla Douglas. This school is part of Greenshaw Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Will Smith, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Anne Spackman.

What is it like to attend this school?

There are high expectations for what pupils can achieve and most pupils are achieving well. Pupils enjoy studying a wide range of subjects throughout their time in the school and appreciate the guidance they receive as they select their options and consider their future career plans. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and other forms of disadvantage receive additional support throughout transitions to make sure that they can reach their goals. However, attendance of pupils who are disadvantaged is too low and so they do not always benefit from all the school offers.

The school also has high expectations for how pupils should behave, and they are well supported to succeed. For example, pupils are expected to come to lessons with equipment and so the school provides spare equipment every morning for all pupils who need it. In lessons, pupils work hard, and they benefit from disruption-free learning. On the rare occasion that pupils do prevent others from learning, they are given the help they need to get it right in future. The school has a calm and orderly environment, where pupils feel safe. However, not all pupils are happy with the systems that help to create this environment.

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

The school has created a broad and ambitious curriculum. This can be seen in the increase in those studying modern foreign languages and triple sciences. In key stage 3, pupils study a wide range of creative arts and design and technology subjects. In subjects across the school, leaders have clearly identified what pupils need to learn and how this knowledge will help them to produce high-quality work and answer challenging questions.

Pupils, including those students in the sixth form, are taught by teachers who are experts in their subject. These teachers have a strong understanding of how to use lesson time very well to support pupils to learn more and to achieve well.

The needs of pupils with SEND are identified quickly. The school creates Pupil Passports, which set out how teachers can adapt their lessons to help meet the needs of these pupils. These strategies are well embedded into classrooms across the school and pupils can talk with confidence about how they are being helped. When needed, the school puts in place further interventions outside of lessons, including support with mental health. The school works well with external agencies to get pupils the help that they need. There is also effective support for pupils who struggle to read. The school identifies specific barriers to reading and then tailors sessions to meet these needs. The school prioritises reading. Pupils start each day by reading a challenging book together in their tutor group.

Although pupils who are disadvantaged are supported well in school, the attendance of some of them is too low to benefit from this support, and they are underperforming. This is a particular issue for those who are persistently absent. The school has taken swift action to address concerns with attendance, but this has not yet been as effective as it needs to be.

There is a very well-planned curriculum for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. This includes a thorough programme for relationship, sex, and health education (RSHE). Both are adapted throughout the year to take into account the emerging needs of pupils. The school also has a comprehensive careers programme that ensures pupils get the advice they need from a range of employers. They also learn about different options for apprenticeships and technical qualifications. Students in the sixth form are especially well supported to make decisions about their future.

The PSHE and RSHE curriculum has been planned to make sure that pupils have lots of opportunities to reflect on their own views and opinions. This includes opportunities to reflect on questions of morality and spirituality. Pupils can take advantage of different clubs and extra-curricular opportunities. However, at the moment, the uptake of these wider opportunities is low and so does not fully meet the needs of the pupils.

Both the school and trust take staff workload seriously. Most teachers feel well supported with sensible and effective systems to help manage elements of their job such as marking and planning. Where workload has been an issue, such as around the timing of assessments, the new leadership team has taken quick action to bring in changes. The Greenshaw Learning Trust is very active in the school and has provided support during a period of leadership change. This work also ensures that trustees are well informed about the progress and well-being of pupils in their school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Too many pupils miss too much school. This is especially the case for pupils who are disadvantaged. As a result, they are not able to benefit from the high-quality curriculum that the school has planned, and they are not achieving as highly as they should do. The school needs to continue to work with parents to identify and overcome barriers to attendance.
- Too few pupils are engaging in the full range of opportunities offered by the school. This means that they are not developing their interests or broadening their horizons to the extent that they could be. The school should ensure that its wider opportunities are expanded to meet the needs of its pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged.

Background

When we have judged 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 the school to be good in January 2019.

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	142577
Local authority	Bracknell Forest
Inspection number	10322010
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	1,164
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	130
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Anne Spackman
Headteacher	Camilla Douglas
Website	brakenhale.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	29 and 30 January 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act

Information about this school

- The school is part of Greenshaw Learning Trust.
- The headteacher had recently been appointed at the time of the inspection.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers and five unregistered alternative 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

- 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 leaders, including the headteacher, special educational needs team and other leaders. The lead inspector also met with the vice-chair of the board of trustees, the chair of the local governors and with members of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, history, English, languages and design technology. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- 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 also met with leaders to discuss their strategies for behaviour and attendance. They also considered a range of information about the school, including published outcomes and the support provided for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors met with a range of staff and considered their views through the confidential online staff survey.
- Inspectors met with pupils formally and informally around the school, in lessons and at breaktime. Inspectors took account the views of parents through the responses to Ofsted Parent View and communications sent to the inspection team.

Inspection team

Mark Enser, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Mike Serridge

Ofsted Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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