

# The Brakenhale School

Rectory Lane, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 7BA

## Inspection dates

29 to 30 January 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher is highly ambitious for the future of the school. Parents, staff and pupils are very complimentary about how much the school has improved. Pupils' achievements have improved rapidly.
- Leaders check the quality of learning to ensure that pupils make good progress. Teachers value the training they receive. Accordingly, the quality of teaching for pupils continues to improve.
- Leaders set high expectations for behaviour and academic progress. Pupils behave well, and the previous high number of exclusions has reduced significantly.
- Governors and trustees are extremely knowledgeable about the school. They challenge leaders highly effectively about pupils' progress.
- Pupils' progress in English is very strong. Progress in science is not as strong and remains a priority for leaders. Previous weaknesses in modern foreign language teaching are being addressed. Current pupils' progress overall is good.
- The majority of teachers plan lessons well. As a result, pupils engage well and have positive attitudes to their learning.
- Pupils are confident, articulate and exceedingly courteous. Leaders encourage pupils to respect the diversity of people in society. As a result, pupils are tolerant and respectful towards each other.
- Leaders have improved pupils' attendance, including that of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils' attendance is close to the national average.
- Pupils with SEND, and those who are particularly vulnerable, are supported extremely well so that they make strong progress from their starting points.
- Leaders encourage students in the sixth form to be aspirational and ambitious. Consequently, the number of sixth-form students applying for and securing places at higher education is increasing.
- Students in the sixth form value the wide range of courses available. They make excellent progress in vocational courses. Teachers astutely challenge students to deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- Safeguarding is highly effective. Pupils understand the risks in society and know how to keep themselves safe.

## Full report

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

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good or better so that all groups of pupils make at least good progress by:
  - helping pupils to understand fully what they need to do to improve their work further
  - helping pupils to deepen their knowledge, understanding and skills
  - making sure that all teachers plan learning to meet the needs of pupils and they adapt activities when necessary.
- Raise the progress and attainment of all groups of pupils so that they achieve at least as well as other pupils nationally across all subjects, particularly modern foreign languages.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- The headteacher, ably supported by the leadership team, has been highly effective in improving the school since it became an academy. One parent's comment is typical of what many said: 'There's been a massive improvement. Mrs Coley and her staff have been amazing.' Pupils' achievements have risen rapidly, and they make good progress in many areas of the school curriculum.
- Parents responding to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, are highly positive about the school. Parents speak warmly about the headteacher, leadership team and teachers in creating a culture of high expectations. For example, one parent commented, 'The school has excellent teachers and leadership team who are always willing to go the extra mile.' Ninety-five per cent of parents who responded to Parent View would recommend the school to other parents.
- Leaders have engendered a strong ethos of high expectations for behaviour and academic progress. Consequently, the school provides a calm and orderly environment for learning. Leaders have significantly reduced the previously high numbers of pupils receiving fixed-term exclusions.
- Leaders have created an extremely positive learning culture in the school. Staff value highly the regular opportunities for further training founded in educational research. Accordingly, the quality of teaching is improving swiftly.
- Leaders' monitoring of teaching is highly effective. Teachers value their discussions with leaders following the 'developmental drop-ins' to improve the quality of teaching. Subject leaders have a very clear understanding of their subjects' strengths and areas that need further development. As a result, learning is improving across all subjects.
- Leaders have broadened the number of subjects that pupils are able to choose for their GCSE qualifications. Pupils are guided to follow courses most suitable to them, taking account of their strengths and weaknesses.
- Pupils are very positive about their school. They value the opportunities to take part in activities beyond the classroom, for example in drama and music, leading to the current school production of 'We Will Rock You'.
- Pupils are prepared extremely well for life in modern Britain. They have a strong set of values and a high level of respect towards others. Pupils understand the concepts of tolerance and individual liberty. One pupil said, 'It is safe for you to be how you are.' Accordingly, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is highly developed.
- Leaders and governors make excellent use of the additional funding available to support disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. Pupils are provided with a broad range of additional support to help them improve. For example, the majority of pupils attending breakfast club now attend school regularly. Furthermore, the support has led to improvements in pupils' work.

- Most pupils typically join the school with below-average literacy levels. Leaders have ensured that the Year 7 catch-up funding is used well. Consequently, pupils' levels of literacy and numeracy have improved.
- Leaders receive precise and effective support from the Greenshaw Learning Trust. The trust provides support for teaching and learning and finance and resource development. Trustees liaise well with governors to support them in improving the school.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors and trustees are highly knowledgeable about the school. They receive detailed and comprehensive information about the school from school leaders. Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses, and they challenge leaders appropriately about pupils' progress. As a result, there is an honest and open dialogue between governors and leaders.
- Governors are reflective, and they evaluate their own performance. Governors visit the school regularly, and they value their conversations with senior leaders. Consequently, governors understand fully how the school works.
- Governors have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. They undertake appropriate training, including how to keep children safe. Governors manage the school finances well, and the budget is in balance.
- Trustees have an excellent overview of the school and rightly have confidence in the local governing body to build on the recent improvements.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. A culture of safeguarding permeates throughout the school. School leaders ensure that policies and procedures are comprehensive. As a result, pupils feel very safe. They feel confident to be able to talk to members of staff if they have any concerns.
- Leaders take decisive action to ensure that pupils are supported well. Leaders liaise very effectively with outside agencies when the need arises. Staff have received appropriate training to support pupils' well-being. They know about local risks and the signs to look for that pupils may be in danger, for example in recognising the signs of child sexual exploitation and radicalisation.
- Leaders manage the site well, in spite of the extensive building programme, in order to ensure that pupils are safe. All visitors are appropriately checked.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- In the main, teachers plan learning well to engage and challenge pupils to improve their work. Teachers use resources creatively to engage pupils in their learning. An overwhelming majority of pupils said that teachers help them to do their best.
- Teaching is particularly strong in English, especially in encouraging pupils to develop a depth of vocabulary to improve their analysis of literature. A whole-school approach to

literacy places a strong emphasis on pupils improving their language skills. Teachers encourage pupils to use subject-specific language, including the use of key words across all subjects. Pupils are encouraged to read widely.

- In mathematics, information technology and design technology the impact of teaching over time on pupils' progress is strong. Consequently, pupils' attitudes to learning are overwhelmingly positive. In business studies, pupils commented that they enjoy the opportunities to work independently and to be creative. As a result, pupils take responsibility for their own learning.
- A history of weaker teaching over time has led to slower progress in modern foreign languages. Current teaching is much stronger and is leading to improvements, especially in key stage 4.
- Teachers promote a positive ethos and typically use questioning carefully to clarify and check pupils' understanding. Most teachers have secure subject knowledge that ensures their lessons are planned well. Consequently, pupils deepen their knowledge and understanding. Occasionally in science, pupils are not given work that is appropriately challenging in order to help them make sufficient progress.
- Additional adults are deployed effectively in classrooms. They guide and support pupils well in their learning. For example, the two-way process of communication between the teacher and teaching assistant in both English and geography informs future planning for pupils' learning.
- Leaders have set clear expectations of how pupils should present their work. Pupils overwhelmingly follow the policy and take great pride in their work.
- Teachers provide pupils with effective feedback. The majority of pupils know how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve further. In a minority of cases, teachers do not apply the school's marking policy consistently.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Outstanding

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils are confident, polite and respectful towards others, and they speak enthusiastically about their school. Pupils were very courteous to inspectors during the inspection and regularly held doors open for inspectors, politely greeting them with a 'hello' or a 'good morning'.
- Pupils stated emphatically that the school encourages them to respect people from other backgrounds and to treat everyone equally. Pupils' knowledge of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people ensures that these pupils feel safe in school. The LGBT club 'Identity' to support LGBT pupils takes place at lunchtime. Information on tolerance and diversity is built into the assembly programme and through displays around the school. Pupils said that bullying is not acceptable.
- Pupils are aware, through the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme and assemblies, of online risks such as grooming and of what radicalisation

means. Consequently, pupils feel extremely safe and know how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

- Pupils who attend alternative provision are safe and prepared well for their next steps. Regular communication between leaders, the providers and parents ensures that these pupils benefit from effective individual support.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The headteacher and leaders set high expectations of behaviour. As a result, pupils' behaviour is exemplary, both in lessons and around the school site. Pupils listen attentively to teachers. Pupils are self-disciplined when moving around school, and they respect their school environment. Lack of litter and graffiti exemplifies how well they care for their school.
- Leaders' actions have improved attendance. Overall attendance for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils with SEND is close to the national average, and is rising this academic year. Leaders ensure that pupils who are persistently absent are supported well by the student support team, including working closely with parents so that pupils attend more frequently.
- The number of pupils who received fixed-term exclusions has been particularly high in the past. Leaders' actions have been effective in significantly reducing the number of fixed-term, including repeat, exclusions. Permanent exclusions rose in 2017/18, but they are now in line with the national average.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils make good progress, as shown by overall GCSE results in 2018, current pupils' books, their work in lessons and assessment information provided by the school.
- Current pupils' workbooks show that overall rates of progress for disadvantaged pupils are improving, and are similar to those of all pupils, across a wide range of subjects. This is because leaders make effective use of pupil premium funding to remove barriers to learning.
- Pupils make stronger progress in English. GCSE results in 2018 showed that the most able pupils made more progress in English than other pupils nationally with similar starting points. In mathematics, pupils made broadly similar progress to other pupils nationally.
- Pupils' progress in modern foreign languages was significantly below that of other pupils nationally in 2018. However, current pupils' progress is improving because of more effective and challenging teaching.
- GCSE results in 2018 showed that pupils' progress in humanities and science was not as strong as in English and mathematics. It is improving, but leaders know that these are subjects that require continued focus.

- In key stage 3, pupils' workbooks show that their work is improving over time in its breadth and depth. Pupils are able to read confidently and are articulate in responding to teachers' questions.
- Pupils with SEND, and those who are particularly vulnerable, are supported well by the student support centre. These pupils make strong progress from their starting points because the strategies that leaders use to help them to improve their learning are effective.
- Pupils are provided with highly effective careers education and guidance which enables them to make sensible and well-informed choices for their GCSEs and beyond. Pupils value opportunities to learn from outside speakers about technical education and apprenticeships. Disadvantaged pupils are supported well by business mentors. Leaders raise the aspirations of all pupils, which has led to a significant increase in the number of pupils staying in education, particularly in the school's sixth form.

### **16 to 19 study programmes**

### **Outstanding**

- Provision in the sixth form meets the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programmes.
- Leaders have high expectations and encourage students to be aspirational and ambitious in their future plans. The head of sixth form and the deputy headteacher monitor carefully the impact of support for students on their learning and well-being. Consequently, more students are applying to higher education and are successful in gaining places.
- In 2018, students' progress in vocational courses was well above that of other students nationally. Current students make strong progress in their A-level courses, following a dip in students' overall progress in 2018. Current students make very strong progress in the majority of subjects. Where there is underachievement, it is tackled swiftly by teachers.
- Students who retake GCSEs in English and mathematics achieve above-average outcomes. The number of students gaining standard pass grades in these subjects has increased over time.
- A wide range of subjects is available. The sixth form is highly inclusive, and disadvantaged students' progress is similar to that of other students nationally. Students are extremely complimentary about the sixth form. They feel highly valued and respected.
- The impact of teaching on students' progress is very strong. Teachers have very high expectations, and they plan courses that encourage students to be independent. Furthermore, teachers provide students with extremely valuable guidance so that students are clear about how to improve their work further.
- Teachers ask challenging questions that help to deepen students' knowledge and understanding. For example, in biology and criminology, students demonstrate exceptional engagement and positive attitudes.
- Students behave impeccably. They are excellent role models for younger pupils in the school. Students' attendance is high. The retention of students on courses from Year 12 to Year 13 is also high.

- Students are very positive, especially about the PSHE programme. Students' understanding of personal safety and personal skills is well developed. They appreciate the opportunities to learn about safe travel and provision for financial education, and they value the 'safe drive' programme.
- Currently, the extra-curricular opportunities available to students have a strong focus on sporting activities. Leaders have credible plans in place to broaden further the non-qualification offer.

## School details

Unique reference number	142577
Local authority	Bracknell Forest
Inspection number	10088103

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1096
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Karen Roche
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Coley
Telephone number	01344 423 041
Website	<a href="https://brakenhale.co.uk">https://brakenhale.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:mainreception@brakenhale.co.uk">mailto: mainreception@brakenhale.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized secondary school.
- The majority of pupils (78%) are of White British heritage, with a proportion of minority ethnic groups broadly in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is broadly average and in line with the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils (32%) is just above the national average (28%).

- Currently, a small number of pupils attend off-site provision at College Hall, Wokingham for behavioural and medical needs.
- The school is part of a multi-academy trust, the Greenshaw Learning Trust.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 55 lessons, including a number of short visits to tutor groups. The majority of lessons were visited jointly with senior leaders. During visits to classes, inspectors looked at pupils' work in their books.
- Inspectors examined a selection of pupils' work from key stages 3 and 4.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and staff, including newly qualified teachers, academic senior and middle leaders, and the regional director of the Greenshaw Learning Trust.
- Inspectors took account of 114 responses to Ofsted's confidential staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors met a representative group of governors from the local governing body and a trustee from the Greenshaw Learning Trust.
- Inspectors took account of 94 responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as written comments submitted by 91 parents. An inspector spoke to one parent in person.
- Pupils' views were gathered from meetings with pupils from Years 7, 9, 10 and 11, with post-16 students, and from 87 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. Informal conversations with pupils took place around the school and at different times of the school day.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of school documentation. This included leaders' evaluations of the school's performance, the school development plan, information about standards and pupils' progress, information on the school's website, records of pupils' attendance, governors' minutes, and a range of policies and information, including those relating to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Christopher Lee, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Foster	Ofsted Inspector
Christopher Doherty	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Willman	Ofsted Inspector

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