Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Brent Knoll School

Perry Rise, London SE23 2QU

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 November 2024

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that the school's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Brent Knoll develop and mature in a safe and supportive environment. Many have experienced significant challenges in their lives, including difficulties with their communication and social skills. Some also find it difficult to regulate their behaviour. The school manages these challenges with skill and determination. Pupils' behaviour improves noticeably as they move through the school.

Staff are patient, believe in everyone's potential to succeed and have a detailed understanding of each pupil's circumstances. This is what helps pupils achieve particularly well. The combination of high aspirations, strong arrangements to identify each pupil's specific needs and a rigorous focus on ensuring high levels of attendance is what makes the school so effective.

Parents and carers bear out the school's high-quality provision. They are rightly fulsome in their praise for the school. The personalised curriculum for each pupil and the high-quality communication with parents have a strong impact on pupils' personal and academic achievements. This helps to ensure that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils leave the school at the end of Year 11 or Year 12 with recognised, accredited qualifications or awards.

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

The school does many things extremely well. One of the most significant of these is helping pupils to develop their communication and social skills. Part of this work is enabling pupils to understand their emotions and recognise when they need to regularise

their behaviour. Pupils become increasingly able to regulate their behaviour themselves, which, in turn, allows them to engage in learning and achieve well.

The school's broad and ambitious curriculum contributes significantly to the high quality of pupils' learning. It helps to ensure that pupils experience important ideas and values. In English, for example, pupils study a range of literature, including poetry and Shakespeare. The personal, social and health education programme helps pupils to develop their wider skills and knowledge, for example of relationships and respect. Pupils learn about money and work as part of an effective careers programme.

The curriculum has been revised very successfully. Knowledge and skills are sequenced carefully to help ensure that pupils progress through the curriculum logically. Teachers make sure that pupils grasp the basics before moving to the next topic. The school's approach to teaching phonics helps pupils to become fluent in reading and writing. For some pupils, achieving fluency takes time, but there is a sharp focus on getting all to read. Where pupils struggle, the school provides lots of support to help them catch up as quickly as possible.

The way that the curriculum is taught is adapted carefully to take account of pupils' individual needs. A key strength is the way the curriculum is presented to pupils. Teachers use their expertise and knowledge of pupils to engage them in learning very effectively. This is especially the case where pupils struggle to concentrate.

The provision for early years is particularly strong. The curriculum is organised to enable children to move from Reception to Year 1 seamlessly and without stress. Great emphasis is placed on establishing clear expectations. Children and pupils learn to follow classroom routines as soon as they join the school. This serves them well as they move through the school and helps to ensure that behaviour is strong.

The school is especially successful in making sure that all pupils leave school for college, training or, in some cases, a job. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme as well as a significant focus on work experience are key elements of this work. In addition, links with local secondary schools enable some pupils to study for GCSE examinations, for example in mathematics.

The formal curriculum is enhanced most successfully through the range of trips, visits and experts who support the school's work. For example, trips to the Victoria and Albert Museum and other London museums help to broaden pupils' experiences. After-school clubs, including in sports, also support pupils' wider learning. Therapeutic work supports pupils' specific needs and successfully engages them in learning. These and wider experiences contribute considerably to the next stage in pupils' lives.

Senior leaders and governors ensure that staff workload and well-being are given proper consideration. Staff at all levels feel well supported, noting that the school's culture is one of cooperation and support. For example, the school has recently set up a well-being group made up of teachers and learning support assistants.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in July 2015.

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	100760
Local authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	10345684
Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	4 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	175
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	8
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Laura Deitz
Headteacher	Paul Shaw
Website	www.brentknollschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 June 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with speech, language and communication needs. Many pupils have been diagnosed with autism.
- The school uses alternative provision.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2024.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and assistant headteachers. Inspectors also met with teachers and other staff.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors. A meeting was also held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered parents' responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey, including their written comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Brian Oppenheim, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Joanna Tarrant	Ofsted Inspector

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