

Inspection of Brackenfield Special School

Bracken Road, Long Eaton, Nottingham, Derbyshire NG10 4DA

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 November 2024

The quality of education **Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes **Outstanding**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Outstanding**

Early years provision **Outstanding**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish at Brackenfield Special School. All pupils who attend this school have an education, health and care plan (EHCP). Warm, caring and respectful relationships underpin the high-quality education that pupils receive. A skilled staff team welcomes every pupil each morning, ensuring a positive and calm start to the day. Pupils develop strong friendships with one another.

Consistent, safe routines ensure pupils know what lies ahead each day and throughout the day. Staff expertly use a wide range of communication approaches to support each pupil. Pupils feel safe and love their time at Brackenfield. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary.

The school has meticulously planned out the curriculum for each of the five curriculum 'pathways' from early years to key stage 4. The curriculum meets the wide range of pupils' complex needs exceptionally well. This, combined with high expectations and a personalised approach to the curriculum, means that pupils achieve strong personal outcomes from their starting points. They are exceptionally well prepared for adulthood.

Pupils love spending time with the school dogs, Teddy and Harvey, and cycling on the school's 'Brack Track'. They enjoy experiences in the school's sensory immersion room and soft play.

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

The school does everything possible to develop a detailed understanding of pupils' starting points. This includes their communication and learning needs, sensory needs, and emotional and health needs. As a result, staff have an in-depth understanding of what each pupil needs and when. This leads to all pupils following highly bespoke learning pathways that meet their needs exceptionally well. These pathways are based on a well-constructed curriculum that has a clear set of goals. These ambitious, yet realistic, goals are set out in achievable and detailed steps. Pupils respond by trying hard in lessons. Staff celebrate achievements, however small, with joy which is shared by pupils. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning.

The school is determined to achieve the absolute best it can for all pupils. Staff have regular professional development which ensures teaching is skilfully adjusted to meet pupils' needs. This includes the extensive, skilful use of a wide range of communication methods. As a result, pupils develop the ability to express their emotions, needs and knowledge.

The youngest children quickly become comfortable in their new surroundings. They develop strong relationships with adults, learning and developing well. Children enjoy songs and rhymes as well as sensory stories. When ready, pupils access pre-phonics and phonics learning. Pupils are provided with books to read that match the sounds they know. As a result, they develop fluent reading skills. Reading is a high priority. Pupils love stories being read to them and performing in the school annual production. For example, pupils loved the recent production of 'Matilda', which they performed to parents.

Staff are well trained to support pupils showing any signs of upset or distress. The school works exceptionally well with pupils to develop ways of helping them to remain calm, sometimes modelling this until they can do this independently. This helps pupils to remain calm and get back on track with their learning. Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the school. As a result, the school is a very calm environment which promotes learning at every opportunity. The school's work over the past few years to improve attendance has had a significant impact. Pupils attend school well.

The personal development offer for pupils is exceptional. It is a golden thread through all the school does. Pupils learn about important aspects of safety, such as how to stay safe on the roads and online. They learn about topics such as how to keep themselves healthy and positive relationships. As part of enterprise education, pupils make crafts which they sell locally. They learn about money when they go to the shops. Pupils enjoy growing food in the school garden and cooking meals together. Pupils therefore gain the confidence, knowledge, and skills they need for life after school.

The school provides strong careers advice and support to all pupils. Comprehensive independent living and employability curriculums ensure that pupils are well prepared for adulthood. All pupils who have recently left the school have successfully moved on to college or appropriate further training.

Governors provide unwavering support for leaders. Governance of the school is highly effective. Leaders are relentless in their desire to improve the life chances of pupils. Staff say that school leaders consider their workload and well-being when making decisions. Staff are very proud to be part of the school which has a genuine sense of teamwork.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	113031
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10347386
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	175
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Gemma Watts
Headteacher	Trish Turner
Website	www.brackenfield.derbyshire.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	28 and 29 June 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a special school for pupils between the ages of 3 and 16 years.
- All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school caters for pupils with specific learning difficulty; visual impairment; hearing impairment; speech, language and communication; autistic spectrum disorder; multi-sensory impairment; physical disability; severe learning difficulty; and profound and multiple learning difficulty.
- The chair of governors took up post in August 2024.
- The school currently uses one 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

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements

(quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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.
- 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading; mathematics; communication; and the independent living curriculum. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work where available, including photographic and video evidence.
- To explore the wider curriculum, inspectors also discussed the curriculum in two other subjects with curriculum leaders.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, school senior leaders and staff from curriculum learning areas. The lead inspector met with support staff.
- Inspectors observed social times and pupil arrival.
- The lead inspector met with governors, including the chair of the local governing body, as well as a senior representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents and records linking to attendance and behaviour, as well as school improvement documentation and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils, parents and staff through discussions and a consideration of their responses to the online surveys, including the free-text facility in Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also had telephone conversations with several parents.

Inspection team

Anne Maingay, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sean Kelly

Ofsted Inspector

Liz Moore

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024