

Inspection of an outstanding school: Brays School

Brays Road, Sheldon, Birmingham, West Midlands B26 1NS

Inspection dates:

4–5 February 2020

Outcome

Brays School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Brays is a school where pupils achieve amazing things. They succeed because skilful and enthusiastic staff provide exceptional care and well-planned lessons. Pupils overcome barriers to learning quickly because they get the right help. Communication and independence are priorities. Staff ensure that all pupils have the right skills so the world around them can hear their 'voice'.

Recent developments at Sheldon and the new autism provision at Tile Cross have made things even better. Both sites are warm and caring environments. Both focus on getting the very best outcomes for every pupil. Both are successful. Pupils are proud of their school and inspired by the lessons they experience.

Pupils behave well in lessons, breaktimes and around school. This is because staff look beyond any incident to see the reasons for the behaviour. As a result, they provide the right sensory, learning or emotional support. This ensures that pupils thrive in a calm and relaxed atmosphere. Bullying is rare. Leaders investigate any incidents and act when needed.

Parents told us that this is a great school. They say staff work 'above and beyond' to make a positive difference to the lives of their children. We agree.

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

Children get off to the best possible start in the early years. This is because staff in the early years get to know each child's needs well. Exceptional individual care means that children feel safe and are safe. Positive relationships ensure that pupils develop as confident learners. Children's communication, physical and personal skills develop quickly in an exciting and colourful environment.

Leaders have ensured that all pupils experience a wide range of different lessons. Teachers make sure these lessons get the very best outcomes for pupils. As a result,

pupils are learning and remembering more every day. Even so, leaders are always looking for ways to make sure they do even better.

All pupils quickly learn how to communicate. Skilled staff work with speech and language therapists to make sure the right communication system is in place for each child. From using Eye Gaze, to symbols and sign language pupils are confident in expressing their needs and feelings. Caring staff make sure pupils' 'voices' are heard and acted upon. Some parents shared with us inspirational accounts of how, because of the school's work, their child can now talk to them.

Teachers carefully plan lessons to make sure that even pupils with the most complex needs find enjoyment in reading. When they are ready, pupils quickly learn the phonics skills they need to read. Daily reading sessions provide opportunities for pupils to develop their fluency and their understanding of what they have read. Teachers enthusiastically read to all pupils using props and sensory experiences. When pupils fall behind, teachers act to make sure they get the support they need to catch up.

Mathematics provides pupils not just with skills such as addition and multiplication, but also with the opportunities to apply these skills to the world around them. For example, pupils told us about the trips to the supermarket to practise their money skills. Teachers carefully match lessons to the abilities of the pupils. This means that pupils find learning easier because the lesson builds on what they already know.

The creative curriculum is a strength. Teachers combine drama, art and dance into exciting lessons. Visiting artists enrich these and develop the skills of school-based staff. A well-resourced sensory studio not only immerses pupils in imaginative themes such as 'earth and beyond' but also provides valuable opportunities to teach science, history and geography.

Leaders have prioritised the skills that pupils need to take an active role in the world around them. Trips to places such as Birmingham Safeside or the Aston Villa Academy support the pupils' understanding of how to stay safe and be healthy. Regular visitors such as St Johns Ambulance service or the fire brigade not only help pupils to understand these roles in the local community, but also broaden their understanding of careers and jobs.

Leaders monitor attendance closely to make sure all pupils attend frequently. There are a high number of pupils with such complex medical needs that mean regular attendance can be difficult. In these cases, teachers take learning to the child, whether it be at home or at hospital. Not a moment of learning is lost.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive. They believe that leaders provide the training and support they need to make the greatest difference to all the pupils. They feel the school is well led and managed. We agree.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff work together to make sure that pupils feel safe and are safe. Quality training is in place to ensure that all know how to raise concerns when they are worried about a pupil's welfare. Leaders follow up on these concerns to make sure that the child is safe, bringing in external help when required. Pupils and families therefore get the high-quality support they need.

Leaders and trustees make sure all required pre-employment checks are in place. All safeguarding policies and procedures are clear and understood by staff.

Background

When we have judged a special school to be outstanding we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged Brays School to be outstanding on 14 February 2013.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 144042 |
| Local authority | Birmingham |
| Inspection number | 10122530 |
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Academy special converter |
| Age range of pupils | 2 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 259 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | David Lane |
| Headteacher | Andrea Davis |
| Website | www.brays.fet.ac |
| Date of previous inspection | 13–14 February 2013 |

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, the school has increased in size from 88 pupils to 259.
- The school has expanded to include a provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders at a separate site in Tile Cross.
- A new headteacher took up post in September 2018.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, we focused on the following subjects: reading, communication and language, mathematics and the creative curriculum. In these subjects, we visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, examined teachers' plans and talked with pupils and staff about the way these subjects were taught. We also looked at other subjects in less detail to check how they were planned and taught.
- We examined external performance data about the school and looked at school documents. These included information about behaviour, attendance, the school curriculum and improvement planning. The school website was also checked.
- We asked staff, leaders, local academy members and trustees about safeguarding arrangements. We examined the record of employment checks on school staff and

looked at other school records. We also found out about safety procedures and routines.

- We observed informal times of the day, to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- During the inspection, we had formal meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject teachers, governors, teachers and pupils. We also talked informally with parents, pupils and staff to gather general information about school life. One inspector spoke to representatives from the multi-academy trust.

Inspection team

Chris Pollitt, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jo Owen

Ofsted Inspector

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