

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Brays School

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

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 June 2025

Outcome

Brays School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Kari Anson. This school is part of Forward Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Simon Dilkes, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Kate Canty.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish at Brays School. The school's vision of 'BraysBelonging' is deeply embedded across the whole community. Pupils feel safe, welcomed and celebrated for who they are. The school provides a warm and inclusive learning environment where pupils are nurtured to develop their independence, communication and confidence. As a result, pupils achieve highly and enjoy coming to school.

Staff know their pupils very well. Relationships are rooted in care, dignity and respect. Pupils' individual needs are well understood and skilfully supported. This helps pupils to settle quickly and participate fully in school life. Staff are experts in identifying the evolving needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Pupils experience a wide range of creative opportunities, including drama, music and community visits. A love of reading is celebrated through events such as pop-up libraries and visits from authors and public figures. Pupils love to read, especially to Rusty, the school dog. Pupils enjoy lunchtime clubs, visits to theatres, residential trips and even looking after the school chickens.

Pupils' views are actively sought and valued. They take part in decision-making, contribute to national campaigns and enjoy leadership opportunities. Pupils leave the school well prepared for their next stage of education and for life beyond school.

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

Brays School offers an ambitious curriculum that meets the complex needs of its pupils exceptionally well. This begins in the early years, where children build strong foundations for future learning. The curriculum is organised into three clear pathways. These enable pupils with similar needs to learn together. The creative arts curriculum is a strength of the school. Pupils access the sensory drama studio, where music, visuals and movement bring learning to life. This supports pupils' imagination, expression and enjoyment.

Staff deliver the curriculum effectively and skilfully. Teachers use a wide range of strategies to check pupils' understanding. This helps pupils to build on their previous learning and gain new knowledge. Over time, pupils achieve their individual outcomes successfully. Their outcomes in communication and independence are particularly strong.

Reading across the school is prioritised and celebrated. There is a strong culture of reading. Pupils access high-quality texts that are diverse, inclusive and accessible. For example, pupils with visual impairments benefit from carefully adapted reading materials. Pupils develop skills for life through a well-structured reading programme. Pupils not yet ready for the formal phonics teaching are taught how to identify sounds and engage with texts.

Pupils' communication needs are expertly supported. Throughout the school day, including during snack times, pupils use a range of systems to express their needs, preferences and ideas. This builds their confidence and independence. Pupils who do not use verbal language to communicate successfully use technology, signing and communication books. These carefully planned strategies prepare pupils well for adulthood.

Pupils show highly positive attitudes to learning. From the early years onwards, they know what is expected of them and respond calmly to routines. Staff skilfully understand the link between communication and behaviour. They notice the smallest changes in a pupil's presentation and respond swiftly and sensitively. Relationships are warm and respectful. Staff support pupils with high levels of empathy and consistency.

Pupils' attendance is a high priority for the school. Pupils' attendance is impacted by their associated complex needs. The whole school community, along with the trust, works proactively and relentlessly to support this. Staff work closely with parents and health professionals to ensure every pupil can attend as much as possible.

The curriculum to support the personal development of pupils is exceptional. The school's ethos of belonging drives an extensive programme that supports pupils' confidence and character development. Pupils benefit from residential trips, outdoor learning and events such as 'BraysFest', where music, dancing and performance are enjoyed. They understand how to keep themselves safe, including through age-appropriate teaching about consent and healthy relationships. Pupils have many opportunities to share their views about worldwide events. For example, they visited the House of Lords to campaign on environmental issues.

A dynamic team leads the school well. The school and the trust place pupils firmly at the centre of all decisions. They are relentless in seeking out wider opportunities and breaking down barriers to success. The school works closely with families and professionals to ensure pupils receive the support they need.

Staff are proud to work at Brays School. They feel valued and supported. Leaders take staff's well-being and workload seriously. The school's ethos of 'belonging' extends to the whole community, including staff. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the impact the school has on their children and families.

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 outstanding 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 predecessor school, Brays School, to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in 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 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	144042
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10378273
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	92
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kate Canty
CEO of the trust	Simon Dilkes
Headteacher	Kari Anson
Website	www.brays.fet.ac
Dates of previous inspection	4 and 5 February 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Brays School previously included an additional specially resourced provision for pupils with autism. In September 2021, the trust separated the two settings. This has decreased the number of pupils at Brays School.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been several changes in headteachers. The current headteacher was appointed in January 2024. In addition, the deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2023.
- Brays School is a specialist provider for pupils with complex learning, physical and medical needs. This also includes profound and multiple learning difficulties and severe learning difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.

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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the chair of the trust, subject leaders, teachers and pupils. They also talked with parents. Inspectors also talked informally with staff, including transport assistants and drivers.
- The lead inspector met with the CEO and the trust's director of education.
- The lead inspector also met with a representative of the local authority and an external school improvement adviser for behaviour.
- Inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning, looked at samples of pupils' work and spoke with teachers.
- Inspectors looked at a sample of individual education plans for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils, formally and informally, about their learning and experiences at school.
- Inspectors observed informal times to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- 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 considered responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included free-text comments. Inspectors also looked at responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation, school policies, curriculum documents and SEND records.

Inspection team

Anna Vrahimi, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Gwen Onyon

Ofsted Inspector

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