

# The Brookfield School

Grandstand Road, Hereford, HR4 9NG

## Inspection dates

19–20 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- In the past, governors have been too accepting of information they have been given about the school. As a result, they did not hold leaders to account for their actions. Decisions they have made have not always been accurately recorded.
- Until recently, governors have not always understood fully, nor met, their statutory duties. There has been a lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities within the academy trust.
- Governors do not yet have clear systems in place to check aspects of the school's work including safeguarding, performance management, use of catch-up funding, and behaviour and exclusions of pupils.
- Fixed-term exclusions have risen sharply this year because they are now being recorded appropriately. In the past, pupils were unlawfully excluded.
- The most able pupils are not challenged sufficiently well in their learning to enable them to make accelerated progress.
- The standards of the presentation of pupils' work is variable.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities in mathematics to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills.
- Actions to implement the new vision for the school are not yet precise enough.

### The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has acted swiftly and decisively since his appointment and is addressing the weaknesses that exist within the school.
- There is a clear vision for the school, shared and understood by all. The overwhelming majority of the staff support fully the changes the new headteacher has made, which are making the school a better place in which to work.
- Leaders have effective systems in place to monitor teaching, learning and assessment.
- Good standards in teaching and learning result in good outcomes for the pupils. Pupils are well-prepared for the next stage in education, employment and training.
- The redesigned curriculum and enrichment experiences are having a positive impact on pupils' learning and engagement.
- When pupils need extra help to manage their behaviour, they are supported well by skilled and committed staff members.

## Full report

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

- Improve the school's governance by ensuring that:
  - all governors and trust members understand clearly their roles and responsibilities
  - statutory information about the trust is published, including financial accounting
  - governors improve their systems for checking all aspects of the school's performance, particularly some aspects of safeguarding, the way in which the performance of teachers and other staff is managed, use of Year 7 catch-up funding, and the behaviour and exclusion of pupils
  - governors ask challenging questions of leaders and hold them to account
  - the school's website is compliant with the Department for Education's guidance on what academies should publish.
- Continue to improve leadership and management of the school by:
  - ensuring that leaders and governors work in partnership so that they can contribute fully to the implementation of the school's vision
  - ensuring that leaders' action plans are specific and have measurable success criteria.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - making sure that the most able pupils are provided with challenging work which helps them to make more rapid progress in their learning
  - providing pupils with more opportunities to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics
  - setting high standards for the presentation of pupils' work
- Take swift and focused action to improve the behaviour and attendance of all pupils by:
  - analysing reasons for poor attendance and targeting interventions accordingly
  - reducing the number of fixed term exclusions.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Since his appointment to the post in January 2017, the headteacher has quickly identified weaknesses in some aspects of the school's practice. Previously, safer recruitment procedures were not always followed and inspection evidence confirms that a small number of staff who have now left the school were not interviewed, or had references sought. Improvements have now been made to the way in which staff are appointed and necessary checks have been carried out to make sure all staff are suited to work with children.
- The headteacher has the overwhelming support of nearly all the staff at the school. Nearly half the staff either wrote to the lead inspector or spoke to her face-to-face to express their views about the positive changes to the school, and their support for the new headteacher. Staff recognise that there has been a difficult transition period, but know that changes which are being made will benefit the pupils. Staff say that they now feel valued and they enjoy working at Brookfield School.
- The headteacher has a clear understanding of the strengths of the school, as well as areas which need further development. He is supported by his senior leadership team and together they are determined to improve the weaker aspects of the school's performance. The headteacher is making sure that governors are provided with more detailed information about the school so that they can offer greater challenge to leaders.
- While the wider vision for the future of the school has been shared and understood, leaders have not yet developed fully a measurable action plan for school improvement. Middle leaders have an accurate understanding of improvements which need to be made in their areas of responsibility, but these discrete plans have not yet informed whole-school improvement priorities.
- Leaders know that improvements need to be made to levels of attendance and exclusions, but the information they gather currently is not yet analysed sufficiently well. As a result, there is a lack of clarity about actions leaders need to take to further improve attendance and reduce exclusions.
- Processes for managing the performance of staff have previously lacked rigour. Inspection evidence confirmed that the cycle of managing staff performance has varied from year to year and targets which were set seldom had measurable success criteria or clear references to the teachers' standards. In the past, governors have not been given accurate information about performance management outcomes or pay recommendations.
- Senior leaders have not been trained sufficiently to review individual teachers' performance. Teaching assistants told inspectors they have few opportunities for professional development and their performance has been managed poorly in the past. Improvements have already been made to ensure that these weaknesses are addressed swiftly.
- Pupils' high levels of engagement in the recently-introduced therapeutic curriculum are clear to see. They enjoy the carousel of activities provided, which challenge them

appropriately in their learning. Weekly enrichment activities such as rock climbing, horse riding and a 'bake-off' challenge enable the pupils to engage with their local community. They understand the need for high standards of behaviour when out and about in the local community.

- The school's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) curriculum weaves seamlessly into the wider curriculum. Each subject leader audits SMSC provision within their subject to identify gaps and improve the breadth of learning opportunities. Displays around the school show that themes are presented in an engaging way. For example, pupils learned about British stereotypes then had to discuss and challenge them. Pupils' work celebrates all aspects of SMSC and prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders use a range of assessment information about pupils' progress and attainment to see where pupils may need additional support and intervention to help them. Pupil premium funding is used to support disadvantaged pupils in a variety of ways, with variable results. There is some evaluation of the impact of additional funding, but this is not sufficiently robust. Leaders do not yet evaluate the impact of the Year 7 catch-up funding for literacy and numeracy.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching and learning. They gather a variety of information in a systematic way which informs their judgements. Lesson observations, learning walks, work scrutiny and regular meetings with teachers enable leaders to see where there are strengths or where additional support may be needed.

## **Governance of the school**

- Until recently, governors and trustees have not been clear about their roles and responsibilities within the trust. The trust's statement of strategic direction is out of date. Statutory information about the trust and its governance, including financial accounting has not been published.
- In the past, governors have accepted information they have been given from school leaders, without challenge or rigour. They have not been clear about some of their statutory duties, including some aspects of monitoring safeguarding practices. As governors have neither asked for, nor been presented with this information, they have been unable to monitor emerging trends in a variety of areas.
- Governors have now been made aware by the current headteacher that, prior to his appointment, pupils were excluded unlawfully. Inspection evidence supports this assertion.
- Governors are now more fully involved in the recruitment of staff. This has not always been the case. Historically, some staff have been appointed, promoted or given pay rises without due regard to safer recruitment procedures or the school's policy on pay. The new headteacher has ensured that processes for the recruitment and vetting of staff are now followed closely.
- The chair of governors accepts where there have been failings in the past but is committed fully to improving the governance of the school.
- Some governors visit the school regularly, but their work is not always documented or shared at governing body meetings. The most recent governing body minutes show

that meetings are now structured and governors are providing more challenge to leaders.

- Governors have some understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement for the school. They are now offering a balance of challenge and support to the new headteacher. Governors support the headteacher's vision for an improving school.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff are committed to keeping pupils safe in school and in the wider community. Staff have developed good working relationships with the pupils and listen to what pupils tell them. Staff, including the designated safeguarding lead and deputies, have received appropriate training in all aspects of safeguarding. Staff know to whom they should report if they have any concerns about a pupil. They recognise signs to look for to help identify a child or young person who may be at risk of harm.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe at the school, and nearly all staff agreed that pupils are safe at the school. Pupils told inspectors that, 'We have a connection with all teachers.'
- Leaders are clear about actions they should take if there is an allegation about a member of staff. Staff also understand the procedure that they should follow should they have any concerns.
- Records of safeguarding referrals and subsequent actions are kept securely. Leaders keep detailed information about pupils and hold regular safeguarding meetings to discuss wider concerns. Actions are followed up in a timely way and additional support is sought from other agencies where appropriate.
- Leaders make sure that appropriate risk assessments and checks are carried out at alternative providers prior to pupils starting their placements. In addition to these checks, leaders only allow pupils to use local authority 'approved' providers.
- Systems are in place to support pupils with medical conditions in school so that they can take part in all areas of their education. Leaders make sure that pupils' medication is stored securely and they have received parental consent to administer this medication. However, the recording of the administration of medication is not always accurate.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan lessons well and make links to previous learning. Inspectors saw pupils who were usually engaged in their learning enjoying their lessons. Work is usually matched to pupils' abilities within a lesson. Strong relationships exist between staff and pupils which create a positive environment for learning.
- The recent changes to the curriculum have meant that lessons are presented in a lively and engaging way. In key stage 2, pupils are able to access a carousel of activities. Inspectors saw a group of pupils engaged in their 'fizzy science' lesson, predicting and

learning about how different sweets react with different liquids. Pupils had to record their predictions and outcomes independently and were able to explain why they had come to their conclusions.

- Teaching assistants offer good support for pupils in their learning. In some lessons, teaching assistants were very effective, enabling pupils to work as independently as possible and encouraging them to think about their answers. In other lessons, however, inspectors saw some assistants intervene too quickly, by writing an answer for a pupil, or telling them the solution to the question. On a few occasions, inspectors saw incorrect modelling of spellings, or instances where a pupil was not prompted to correct their misconceptions.
- Pupils are provided with extended writing opportunities, not only in English but in other subjects such as history, geography and food technology. Inspectors saw several examples of evidence in books and displays where pupils are encouraged to write at length.
- There is some variation in the presentation of pupils' work in English and standards in handwriting. Some pupils do not take pride in their work, crossing out work or scribbling on pages. Teachers do not regularly give pupils helpful advice to enable them to improve their handwriting.
- Work is better presented in mathematics. Pupils have frequent opportunities to develop their skills in number and calculations, but this is not the case for problem-solving and reasoning in mathematics and work at greater depth.
- Some of the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to move on in their learning quickly. They sometimes repeat work at the same level too often rather than being given harder work.
- Pupils in key stage 2 have regular opportunities to read and develop their phonic skills. Leaders are planning to promote the importance of reading at home, and will be sending reading books home.
- Teachers share appropriate targets with pupils in their workbooks. Pupils complete regular assessments of their work and reflect on their learning and next steps. Leaders meet regularly with teachers to assess pupils' progress towards these targets. This enables staff to see where pupils may require additional help in their learning or with their social and emotional development.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff know the pupils extremely well and they are able to tailor their support and interventions to reflect this. The school employs a counsellor who can provide additional support for pupils' emotional health and well-being. Nearly all staff are trained 'mental health first aiders'. Leaders meet regularly with outside agencies to discuss support for pupils and reflect on the impact of interventions pupils have received.

- Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe through a variety of topics. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe on the internet. The school's recent e-safety survey showed that all parents who responded said that the school promotes e-safety and keeps them up to date with developments. There are appropriate systems in place for monitoring the use of the internet in school.
- Leaders hold two e-safety days a year to promote safe use of the internet. At any time, pupils can email 'askauntylinda' at the school for advice about staying safe online. Leaders check the records of these enquiries and are able to follow up any safeguarding concerns that may emerge.
- Pupils learn about healthy eating and the importance of physical activity. A number of pupils use the local fitness centre. Breakfast club is free of charge and open to all pupils at the beginning of the day, where they can eat nutritious food donated from a local supermarket.
- As part of the personal, social and health education curriculum, pupils learn about the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Leaders know the risks in the local area and pupils are taught how to stay safe with regard to these. Opportunities to visit a variety of places of worship are built in to these lessons, repeated every year, because leaders recognise the limited diversity of the local area.
- The school council has an active role in the school and enables pupils to consider values of democracy and the rule of law. Pupils are now being given the opportunity to sit on interview panels for members of staff.
- Pupils told inspectors that little bullying takes place in school. If it does, nearly all pupils said that it is dealt with effectively. The school's recent anti-bullying survey for pupils shows that the majority feel that bullying is taken seriously by the school. Records show that very few incidents have taken place over the last year, which supports pupils' views.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions has risen sharply since the new headteacher took up his post. Staff have confirmed that this is not because there are more pupils being sent home, but because exclusions are now properly recorded. Following a review of the effect of exclusions on pupils' outcomes, there is a concerted effort to reduce exclusions further. However, it is too soon to see the impact of these actions.
- The increase in exclusions has had a negative impact on levels of attendance, compared with previous years. Leaders recognise this and are working hard to improve attendance. However, because their analysis of trends in attendance is not focused, they are not yet able to see where their actions are having the most impact.
- The school has addressed the way in which isolation rooms have been used in the past. Since the current headteacher took up his post, staff have received clear advice on the appropriate use of these rooms, in line with current statutory guidance. Staff are no longer allowed to close the door or hold it shut. Doors remain open and pupils are supervised at all times.

- Comprehensive systems are in place for staff to record and report behaviour incidents, including those requiring physical intervention. Records show that there are now improvements in the quality of reporting physical interventions, but leaders know that this could be even better. The frequency of the use of physical interventions is low.
- A new behaviour policy is being developed, and staff have been asked for their views. In the past, some pupils have received consequences such as writing lines. Approaches have now been reviewed and more appropriate alternatives have been put in place. There is a strong focus in the school on the de-escalation of behaviour. In the primary department, leaders are trialling a 'no sanctions' approach, with a greater focus on restorative justice. It is too early to see the impact of this trial.
- Pupils told inspectors that behaviour was usually good in the school. Behaviour in classes and around corridors was generally calm. When pupils needed extra support to help them manage their behaviour, staff carried this out in a calm, non-confrontational way. When it was felt to be appropriate, pupils were quickly encouraged to return to their lessons and make a fresh start.
- There are comprehensive and timely systems in place for checking the whereabouts of pupils if they are absent from school. Leaders take further action to improve attendance where it is low. Nevertheless, too many pupils do not attend school regularly.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- From their different starting points, and based on targets set, most pupils in all key stages are making expected progress over time.
- Pupils of all ages are making good progress in their literacy, across all areas of the curriculum. Standards of literacy seen in other subjects such as history, geography and food technology across the key stages matched those seen in English.
- Leaders make sure that progress in all subjects across all key stages is tracked closely so that additional support can be put in place where pupils' progress slows.
- At the end of key stage 2 in 2017, nearly all pupils achieved or exceeded their targets in English. Disadvantaged pupils performed slightly better than non-disadvantaged pupils in English. Pupils made more progress in English than in mathematics but leaders know the reason for this and have taken steps to remedy the problem. Disadvantaged pupils did not perform as well as their non-disadvantaged peers in mathematics.
- Attainment in English and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 showed that lower prior-attaining pupils did better than their higher prior-attaining peers in both subjects.
- At the end of key stage 3 in 2017, rates of progress in English and mathematics were stronger than those made by pupils in key stage 2. Also, disadvantaged pupils outperformed non-disadvantaged pupils in both English and mathematics.
- Pupils are able to access a broad range of qualifications at different levels, from entry level to level 3 qualifications. Given previous limited opportunities for pupils to gain an accreditation in science, leaders have reviewed the curriculum offer and pupils are now able to access an entry level and level 1 qualification in science.



- Leaders ensure that pupils are able to access qualifications that are appropriately challenging and take into account pupils' prior attainment. At the end of key stage 4 in 2017, pupils gained an average of nine qualifications each, including GCSEs and level 1 and 2 functional skills qualifications. A small number of pupils achieved five A\* to C passes at GCSE. Subjects taken at GCSE include English, mathematics, biology, history, home economics and design technology. A group of key stage 4 pupils based at the Arrow Centre were also able to develop their vocational skills at a variety of alternative providers, preparing them for higher-level accredited courses in the future.
- Pupils are prepared well for their next stage of employment, education and training. As a result, all pupils in 2017 have been successful in securing further education, employment or training. Leaders at the Arrow Centre make regular checks on leavers, offering additional support and intervention if they are at risk of dropping out of their placement.
- Pupils receive regular careers advice and guidance from an independent adviser who visits the school regularly. Pupils in year 10 also have the opportunity to complete one week of work experience, bespoke to their interests. Leaders want to extend these work experience opportunities further and have identified this as an area for future development.

## School details

Unique reference number	141487
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	10037105

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	85
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	June Poole
Headteacher	David Gaston
Telephone number	01432 265 153
Website	<a href="http://www.brookfield.hereford.sch.uk">www.brookfield.hereford.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@brookfield.hereford.sch.uk">admin@brookfield.hereford.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The Brookfield School is a special school for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs. Hereford Integrated Behaviour Outreach Service Trust trades as The Brookfield School.
- The Brookfield school converted to become an academy in 2014. When its predecessor school, Brookfield School was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information on its website about key stage 2 and key stage 4 in the required format, local authority admission arrangements, progress 8 score, a link to the DfE performance tables, up-to-date behaviour policy, impact of pupil premium spending, Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding and detailed governance arrangements.

- The school does not comply with Department for Education (DfE) guidance on what academies should publish about key stage 2 and key stage 4 in the required format, local authority admission arrangements, progress 8 score, a link to the DfE performance tables, up-to-date behaviour policy, impact of pupil premium spending, Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding and detailed governance arrangements.
- The headteacher took up his post in January 2017.
- A large number of pupils are transported to and from school by minibus. Transportation is operated by the school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is over twice the national average.
- The majority of pupils are White British. A small number of pupils are looked after.
- Nearly all the pupils have a statement of special education needs or an education, health and care plan. A small number of key stage 2 pupils experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties attend The Brookfield School for four days a week and are dual registered with their host school.
- A group of key stage 4 pupils are educated offsite at the Arrow Centre. These pupils access alternative provision. The school uses the following providers: Red Castle Training, Horizon Training, Herefordshire Vocational Training, Herefordshire Council Live and Learn and Longlands Care Farm.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited parts of lessons in all key stages, accompanied by senior leaders. They talked to pupils and reviewed their work.
- Inspectors met with a group of pupils to gather their views and talked to them informally in and around the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior staff, middle leaders, teachers and teaching assistants. The lead inspector met with the chair and vice chair of governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered staff's written responses about the school, and the school's own recent staff survey.
- Inspectors analysed the views of parents and pupils from the school's own surveys. There were too few responses submitted to Parent View for inspectors to be able to consider. A very small number of text messages and information from meeting a parent were taken into account.
- An inspector visited the school's offsite provision at the Arrow Centre.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of information about the school including the website, assessment information and performance management documentation. Inspectors sampled a range of staff files. Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence related to safeguarding, including a recent safeguarding audit by the local authority, information about behaviour, attendance and exclusions and minutes of the governing body.

## Inspection team

Deb Jenkins, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Rowena Green

Ofsted Inspector

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