

Inspection of Brackensdale Spencer Academy

Walthamstow Drive, Mackworth Estate, Derby, Derbyshire DE22 4BS

Inspection dates:	15 and 16 October 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The principal of this school is Joanna McGregor. This school is part of Spencer Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Paul West, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Donna Kinderman, who is responsible for this school and 25 others.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where pupils feel valued and included and enjoy learning and spending time with their friends. The school has high expectations for pupils to succeed. This is reflected in the ambition that the school has for its pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, most pupils achieve well and meet the high expectations the school has for them. This is particularly evident in the school's large, SEND enhanced resource provision, where all pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

Pupils' everyday actions embody the school's values to 'be kind, shine bright and aim high'. Pupils value the positive relationships that they have with staff. They benefit from staff knowing them very well as individuals. They trust that staff will help them with any worries or concerns. This helps pupils to feel happy and safe at school. Pupils behave well and show kindness and empathy to each other.

Pupils benefit from a range of clubs and trips that help them to learn the curriculum. They enjoy the weekly 'Brackensdale Books on Tour'.

One parent commented: 'I am proud my children go to Brackensdale; the staff are very caring people and work very hard.'

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

The school has been through transformational change in recent years. Exceptional leadership at all levels has ensured rapid and sustainable improvement in all areas of the school's work. Although their attainment may not be fully reflected in the published outcomes, pupils are increasingly developing a strong, well-connected understanding of their subjects, thanks to the improvements in the school's curriculum design and implementation.

The school has designed a highly ambitious curriculum. This includes the curriculum in the SEND enhanced resource provision, which is expertly tailored to meet pupils' individual needs. The school's work to support pupils with SEND is praiseworthy. Pupils with additional needs are identified swiftly. There are well-structured processes to ensure that pupils with SEND receive appropriate support as quickly as possible. For example, from the Nursery class onwards, staff provide a sharp focus on improving pupils' communication and language skills. This supports pupils, including those with SEND, to achieve well.

Children in Nursery and Reception are very well taken care of. Their environment, both indoor and outdoor, is extremely well designed to meet their different developmental needs.

Teachers benefit from high-quality training that helps them to deliver the curriculum consistently well. Effective training for staff also informs the well-chosen resources and adaptations to curriculum delivery for pupils with SEND. In the early years, staff select

engaging resources which stimulate children's interests and fire their imagination. Teachers regularly check how well pupils learn. This means that any errors or misconceptions are addressed quickly.

The school has ensured that reading is a high priority. The foundations for learning to read are securely built in the Nursery class, where pupils learn sounds through games and rhymes. From the start of the Reception Year, pupils are supported to learn to read confidently and fluently. A love of reading is built into the whole-school curriculum through the careful choice of class books. Pupils read regularly. They enjoy a diverse range of fiction, as well as non-fiction texts, which widen their experiences. In the Reception class, children delight in joining in with their favourite books at story time.

Behaviour across the school is typically positive. This begins in the early years, where children quickly adapt to the school's routines and high expectations for behaviour. A small number of pupils do not always focus on their learning as well as they could. Those children and pupils who need extra help in managing their emotions are supported effectively by caring staff, who are very well trained. Pupils are considerate towards one another and towards staff. Children in the early years show great focus during their play.

The school's systems and procedures to maintain high rates of attendance are highly effective. The school's tenacious approach helps to ensure that where pupils do not attend as often as they should, their rates of attendance improve over time.

The school's approach to promoting pupils' personal development is extremely well thought out. Pupils learn the skills of leadership through roles such as reading leaders and anti-bullying ambassadors. They display a clear understanding of diversity and equality through the way that they embrace each other's differences. They enjoy the wide range of clubs on offer to nurture their talents and interests.

The trust has a secure oversight of the school. Alongside the governors, they have a clear and strong focus on the quality of education provided by the school and carry out their duties highly effectively. The school supports staff well, and staff benefit from a positive working environment.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some instances, pupils do not receive sufficient opportunities to deepen their understanding, including in writing and problem-solving. Therefore, some pupils do not achieve as highly as they could. The school needs to further develop opportunities

within the curriculum for pupils to work to greater depth, so all pupils fully achieve the ambitious aims which leaders intend.

- A small number of pupils do not always focus on their learning as well as they should because the school's behaviour system is not always applied consistently by all staff. The school needs to ensure that the behaviour system is implemented as intended.

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	148384
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	10298552
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	479
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Donna Kinderman
CEO of the trust	Paul West
Principal	Joanna McGregor
Website	http://brackensdalespencer.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This school is part of the Spencer Academies Trust.
- Brackensdale Spencer Academy converted to become an academy in April 2021. When the predecessor school, Brackensdale Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted in November 2019, it was judged to be inadequate for overall effectiveness.
- The principal took up her post in April 2021.
- The school operates a SEND enhanced resource provision for 54 pupils with complex needs, all of whom have an EHC plan. The enhanced resource provision supports pupils with autism, and communication and interaction needs.
- The school runs before- and after-school clubs which are managed by the governing body.
- The school currently uses no alternative provision.

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.
- 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.
- 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; science; and geography. 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.
- To explore the wider curriculum, inspectors also discussed the curriculum in two other subjects with curriculum leaders and looked at pupils' work.
- Inspectors explored the curriculum in the SEND enhanced resource provision with leaders, visited lessons, met with staff and pupils, and reviewed pupils' work.
- The lead inspector met with staff from the trust's central team, including the director of inclusion, the director of primary education, and the director of quality and standards.
- Inspectors met with the principal, senior leaders, and staff from curriculum learning areas.
- Inspectors met with pupils to discuss their views.
- Inspectors observed social times, including snack time and breaktime.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair of governors.
- The lead inspector met with representatives the trust, including the chair of trustees and the CEO of the trust.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation on the school website and documentation relating to the governance of the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents and records linking to attendance and behaviour, as well as school improvement documentation.

- 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.

Inspection team

Anne Maingay, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Linda Azemia

Ofsted Inspector

Chrissie Barrington

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