

Inspection of a good school: Brent River College

364b Stag Lane, Kingsbury, London NW9 9AE

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 March 2023

Outcome

Brent River College continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Brent River College is a warm and welcoming school. Pupils are proud to learn here. They feel safe, and they like the adults who support them.

Pupils who attend the school need extra help and support with their behaviour. The nurturing environment helps pupils to settle quickly and to focus on the skills they need to manage their emotions independently. Consequently, pupils behave very well.

Pupils enjoy their learning, and there is very little disruption to lessons. Pupils learn to communicate their feelings in a calm way and to listen to the opinions of other people. Pupils say that bullying is rare. If it does happen, it is sorted out quickly.

Staff at the school have high expectations for every pupil. Leaders prioritise regular attendance and have ensured a highly consistent approach to behaviour and learning. Pupils benefit from this clear structure and consistency. Staff understand the specific needs of the pupils very well. They adjust their teaching to capture the interests of pupils and to make lessons fun and engaging.

Pupils have a trusted adult they can talk to if they have any worries or concerns. Leaders provide additional therapies and specialist support to strengthen pupil well-being and resilience.

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

Leaders have ensured that there is an ambitious and well-thought-out curriculum in place at this school. It is broad and balanced and includes vocational subjects like construction and sport and fitness for older pupils.

Pupils are assessed when they join the school to identify any gaps they have in their knowledge and to identify any additional needs they may have. School staff work hard to build warm and positive relationships with pupils so that they progress through the curriculum with very little disruption.

The vision that leaders have put in place aims to return as many pupils as possible to mainstream schools, ensuring that pupils can learn alongside their peers. Leaders have made sure that the curriculum prepares pupils by equipping them with the skills and knowledge they need to be ready for this step. In addition to academic subjects, the curriculum also focuses on the important social, emotional and communication skills that pupils will need to make a successful transition. School staff work together with the mainstream schools to make this move as seamless as possible.

Early reading is taught well at the school. If pupils join the school without being able to read confidently, they are helped to catch up quickly. Pupils use their phonic knowledge to help them work out any words that are new to them. Once pupils have become more confident readers, teachers continue to foster a love of reading and to develop pupils' vocabulary in all subjects.

In some subjects, however, the curriculum is not set out as strongly as in other areas. Sometimes, it is not clear what knowledge pupils need to have secured before tackling the next piece of work. Leaders have already begun to address these issues. The new approach to the teaching of mathematics has been introduced well. Leaders are still in the process of embedding this securely but can already see the benefits to pupils' understanding in this subject.

Leaders have put in place a programme for economic well-being. This helps pupils learn about different jobs and careers and make plans for their future. It also helps them learn important skills and knowledge to prepare them for employment. Pupils in Year 11 are supported with applications and interviews for college or apprenticeships. Pupils are well prepared for the next step in their education.

Pupils' wider development is a strength of the school. Leaders have established a tailored curriculum that focuses on pupils' personal development, including resilience and independence. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme also teaches pupils about safe and healthy relationships, healthy lifestyles, mental health and emotional well-being. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe from harm and the dangers of the internet and social media. Pupils' social and cultural development is enhanced through lunchtime and after-school clubs and activities, as well as trips to interesting places such as 'The Old Bailey' as part of a project about British values.

Leaders have ensured that there is a manageable system for tracking pupils' progress through the curriculum. Teachers say that workload is generally manageable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have embedded a culture of safeguarding at the school. Leaders have developed close links with their safeguarding partners and work well with these external agencies.

Leaders are in the process of adopting new system that will help them manage the different pieces of information they have. This will make their systems even stronger.

Staff are vigilant in looking out for the signs that a pupil might need extra help, and they report any concerns quickly. All staff have regular training, and they understand why pupils at the school might be even more vulnerable because of their additional needs.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, curriculum thinking does not always clearly identify the component knowledge that pupils should learn and remember. This means that some pupils do not acquire a deep understanding in these subjects. Leaders should ensure that, in all subjects, the key skills and knowledge are clearly identified so that teachers know what to teach and when.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2017.

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](#)' 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

Unique reference number	133660
Local authority	Brent
Inspection number	10242138
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	54
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Jean Cooper
Headteacher	Vivien Dean
Website	www.brentrivercollege.london
Date of previous inspection	26 and 27 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school makes provision for pupils who have been permanently excluded from other schools because of their behaviour.
- The school has two additional sites: at Poplar Grove, London HA9 9DB and at Cool Oak Lane, London NW9 7ND.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors held discussions with the headteacher and other leaders. Inspectors also met with the vice-chair of governors and spoke to the local authority's interim head of setting and school effectiveness.

- Inspectors met with the safeguarding leads and scrutinised school policies and records of the safeguarding checks on adults who work at the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, early reading and construction. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also considered some other subjects, including English, PSHE and the primary cross-curricular topic work.
- Inspectors met with members of staff, individually and in groups, and spoke to pupils at various points during the inspection. Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey, the 12 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 21 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Gary Pocock, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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