

Inspection of Brown's School

Hawstead Lane, Chelsfield, Hawstead Lane, Orpington, Kent BR6 7PH

Inspection dates: 7 to 9 December 2021

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders do not do enough to ensure pupils' welfare and safety. They do not demonstrate secure knowledge of statutory safeguarding guidance, including the required pre-recruitment checks on staff. Leaders do not ensure that the school complies with fire safety regulations. Safeguarding is therefore ineffective.

The curriculum is poorly planned and delivered. Leaders do not develop teachers' skills and knowledge effectively. Some parents and carers would not recommend the school, citing poor communication as their main concern.

Pupils said they enjoy attending Brown's School. They have positive attitudes and build strong relationships with the staff. Pupils said that the therapists and their chosen 'trusted adults' help them. Bullying is rare. When it happens, leaders deal with it effectively. Pupils respond well to the school's high expectations of their behaviour. They are respectful of each other and behave well. The vast majority of pupils attend school every day.

Staff help pupils to develop their confidence, communication and social skills. Pupils are also taught how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. In the secondary phase, pupils achieve well in English and mathematics.

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

Pupils study a broad range of subjects and have positive attitudes to their learning. However, leaders have failed to plan a curriculum that ensures pupils learn well in all subject areas, including in the sixth form. Curriculum plans are not well sequenced. Leaders have not considered well enough how pupils build on their learning from the primary phase when they join the secondary phase. Pupils are not ready for the next stage of their education. Leaders do not have a phonics programme in place to help pupils learn to read.

Leaders have not focused sharply on training staff to plan and deliver an effective curriculum. Sometimes, staff make choices about what to teach based on their own personal interests or what they think pupils might enjoy. Some teachers, including those at the early stages of their career, do not have the training they need to develop their subject knowledge.

In the secondary phase of the school, leaders have carefully thought about what pupils need to learn and when in English and mathematics. Curriculum plans in these subjects are ambitious. Staff review them regularly to make sure they are tailored to pupils' needs. However, in other subjects, pupils learn things in a disconnected way. Teachers rely too heavily on tests to assess pupils' learning. They do not check precisely what subject content pupils know and remember.

Leaders, governors and the proprietor do not have a sufficient understanding of the requirements for independent schools. The school is not compliant with some of the

independent school standards. For example, the fire safety requirement is not met again. This was the case at the school's previous inspection in 2017. Leaders have not ensured that all the required fire safety checks are carried out on time. Record-keeping is disorganised. The proprietor and governors do not check well enough the effectiveness of leaders' work.

Leaders provide opportunities to promote pupils' personal development. Pupils learn about healthy relationships, equality and British values. They are taught about respecting differences between themselves and other people. Pupils are kind to each other. They clearly appreciate the open and inclusive culture the school provides. Pupils enjoy the many activities on offer, including as part of the 'healthy living' enrichment afternoons.

Staff provide pupils with impartial careers information, advice and guidance. Pupils benefit from a range of therapies. Therapists help to meet the targets set out in each pupil's education, health and care (EHC) plan. Since the previous inspection, therapy is now a more integrated part of the school. However, not all staff are trained well enough in how to meet pupils' individual needs, including their therapeutic needs.

Leaders have not ensured that all the statutory requirements for relationships and sex education (RSE) are met. Parents have not been consulted about RSE and the right to withdraw their children. A number of parents who responded to Ofsted Parent View expressed their dissatisfaction with the school. Many were unhappy about communication with the school and how leaders deal with their concerns.

The school complies with Schedule 10 of the Equality Act. This is because leaders developed an appropriate accessibility plan during the inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The school's system for recruiting staff lacks rigour. For most staff employed since the previous inspection, the recruitment process has not paid regard to government guidance on obtaining references.

At the time of the inspection, there was only one safeguarding leader with the required level of training. This meant there was not a suitably qualified leader to act in their absence. This was rectified during the inspection.

The school's caring staff team knows every pupil well. Staff work hard to support pupils' safety, well-being and mental health.

The school's safeguarding policy is written in line with the latest national guidance and is available online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Safeguarding is not effective. Leaders do not have a secure understanding of statutory safeguarding guidance. The staff recruitment process lacks rigour and guidance on references is not followed. Leaders have not ensured that all the required fire safety checks have been completed. This puts pupils at risk. Leaders must improve safeguarding arrangements, ensuring they take full account of the latest statutory guidance. Leaders should ensure that all the required fire safety checks are completed on time, in line with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- The curriculum is not well planned and sequenced in all subjects. It is not clear what pupils need to know in each subject and year group, including in the sixth form. Leaders have not determined how pupils will develop their knowledge securely over time. This means that pupils do not learn content in a logical order. Pupils in the primary phase of the school are not well prepared for their learning in Year 7. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is well planned to enable pupils to develop secure knowledge over time in each subject.
- The use of assessment to check pupils' learning is not effective. Staff rely too heavily on tests. They do not use assessment well enough to find out whether pupils know and remember the content they have been taught in each subject. Leaders should ensure that the use of assessment is purposeful. They should make sure that assessment helps teachers to check what pupils know and remember and to address any gaps in learning.
- Leaders have not prioritised staff training. They have not ensured that teachers have opportunities to develop their subject knowledge. Not all staff are well trained in meeting pupils' therapeutic needs. This affects pupils' learning. Leaders should review the staff training offer so that staff subject knowledge is secure. They should ensure that staff are well trained to meet the therapeutic needs of pupils with special educational need and/or disabilities (SEND).
- There is no phonics programme in place to help pupils learn to read. Staff do not have what they need to help pupils at the early stages of reading. Leaders should ensure that they plan and implement a systematic, synthetic phonics programme.
- Some of the RSE requirements are not met. Parents have not been consulted on the RSE curriculum in line with statutory requirements. Leaders should ensure that parents are consulted and provided with the opportunity to withdraw their children from sex education.
- Governance is weak. Governors do not have effective systems in place to check the impact of leaders' actions. This means that they do not hold leaders to account well enough. Governors should ensure that more rigorous procedures are put in place to check all aspects of the school's work.
- Leaders' record-keeping is disorganised. For example, personnel files and fire safety records are not maintained well. This affects how well leaders check

compliance with the independent school standards. Leaders should improve systems to check compliance with the independent school standards.

- Leaders have not ensured that all the independent school standards are met. Those not met are listed in the annex to this report. Leaders should know and understand all the standards and take action to ensure they are met consistently.

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.

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

School details

Unique reference number	131395
DfE registration number	305/6078
Local authority	Bromley
Inspection number	10213954
Type of school	Day special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	9 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	90
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	13
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Empowering Tomorrow's People Ltd
Chair	Elaine Lovett
Headteacher	George Mitchell
Annual fees (day pupils)	£28,000
Telephone number	01689 876816
Website	www.brownsschool.co.uk
Email address	info@brownsschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 October to 2 November 2018

Information about this school

- Brown's School is an independent special day school for pupils with EHC plans. Pupils have a range of SEND, including autism spectrum disorder and specific learning difficulties.
- The school now caters for pupils aged 9 to 18 years. It was previously registered for pupils aged 6 to 18 years.
- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed and the school's proprietorial arrangements have changed. The chair of the new proprietor body continues to delegate governance to the governing body.
- The school's most recent inspection was a standard inspection in November 2018.
- Leaders make no use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- This inspection was conducted with one day's notice.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English and reading, science, computing and personal, social, health and economic education. They considered curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke with teachers and met with pupils.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and chair of the proprietor body regularly throughout the inspection. The lead inspector spoke by telephone with the chair of governors.
- Inspectors met with safeguarding leaders and reviewed a range of safeguarding documentation, including vetting checks on staff and employee files.
- Inspectors considered a range of evidence to consider pupils' safety, personal development and behaviour.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and the online staff survey. Inspectors also met with staff. There were no responses to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of evidence to check compliance with the independent school standards.

The school's proposed change to the maximum number of pupils

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school is unlikely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.**

Inspection team

James Waite, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jean Thwaites

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work-
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
 - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress.
- 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor-
 - 2A(1)(d) in making arrangements for the purposes of paragraphs (a), (b) or (c), has regard to any guidance under section 80A of the Education Act 2002 that applies in relation to the provision of education by maintained schools
 - 2A(1)(f) consults parents of registered pupils at the school before making or revising a statement under sub-paragraph (e).
- 2(A)2 Arrangements made by the proprietor for the purposes of sub-paragraph (1)(b) must ensure that where a pupil's parent requests that the pupil is wholly or partly excused from sex education provided as part of relationships and sex education, the pupil is so excused until the request is withdrawn, unless or to the extent that the head teacher considers that the pupil should not be so excused.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;

- 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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 2021