

The Brooksbank School

Victoria Road, Elland, West Yorkshire HX5 0QG

Inspection dates

29–30 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have created a positive climate that makes The Brooksbank School a welcoming and friendly place. The vast majority of pupils succeed in this very popular school.
- The school has come through a period of considerable turbulence in leadership over the last year and a half. This has had a negative effect on some pupils' outcomes in 2016. Senior leaders have appointed new, effective leaders who are making a positive difference.
- Consequently, teaching is effective. Pupils, including the most able, achieve well. They are well prepared for their next stage of education or training.
- The achievement of the 2016 group of disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, by the time they left school, was disappointing. However, the progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school is better. Where pupils have fallen behind, they are catching up.
- Leaders' use of the pupil premium funding is largely effective. However, some leaders do not check carefully enough that initiatives are having the desired effect on pupils' progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants do a good job of supporting pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, so they make good progress.
- Pupils behave well. Strong relationships and engaging teaching cultivate positive attitudes. As a result, pupils are well-motivated, committed learners.
- Pupils are safe and feel safe because safeguarding arrangements are effective. Adults teach pupils how to protect themselves.
- Leaders and teachers actively promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils so they are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders provide effective and impartial advice and guidance to help pupils pursue courses that are well matched to their aptitudes and aspirations.
- The provision for post-16 students is good. Most students make good progress. Just about every student goes on to higher education, training or the world of work.
- Attendance is a little above the national average. However, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent is no better than that found nationally.
- The governing body fulfils all its statutory duties. Governors have helped to eliminate a financial deficit. However, they do not know the school in enough detail to be able to challenge leaders as well as they should.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further diminish the difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally by:
 - rigorously checking that the many initiatives in place continue to have the desired impact on the progress and attendance of disadvantaged pupils
 - improving the small amount of teaching that is less effective.
- Improve the challenge governors provide by:
 - ensuring that leaders give governors more detailed information about pupils' achievement
 - making sure that all governors make a strong contribution to school improvement
 - securing additional external challenge and support.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders have established a strong ethos, which makes this a popular school where the staff feel valued and the pupils are keen to learn. Relationships are good and teachers and pupils have a positive mindset.
- Senior and middle leaders have a well-embedded approach to making checks on the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, leaders know where the strengths and weaknesses are in teaching and pupils' outcomes. Their actions to address weaknesses have resulted in consistency in the quality of teaching across the school.
- Over the last year and a half there has been disruption to the regularity and effectiveness of leaders' checks because a number of senior and key subject leaders left the school or were temporarily out of action. This was compounded by difficulties recruiting good leaders and teachers, especially in mathematics. These issues had a negative effect on some teaching and the outcomes of some pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, many of whom particularly need consistency. Senior leaders were left 'spinning plates' as they tried to fulfil too many roles.
- These problems have been resolved with key appointments. Leaders are back on track with thorough and regular checking. This has once again quickly secured strong consistency in the quality of teaching. Consequently, all groups of pupils are making good progress and most of those who have fallen behind are quickly catching up, including the disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders and teachers set stretching targets for pupils. The school assessment system helps leaders to identify pupils who are falling behind. Leaders work with teachers to make sure that teaching makes appropriate demands on pupils, including the most able pupils and the disadvantaged. Leaders hold teachers to account for meeting targets. Consequently, teaching meets the needs of individual pupils well.
- Leaders make effective use of the pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils. The weak outcomes of disadvantaged pupils at key stage 4 in 2016 are not reflective of the achievement of these pupils across the school. A range of initiatives is making a positive difference to the engagement and progress of disadvantaged pupils, including the appointment of a pupil premium champion in each subject department. Leaders recognise the need to review more regularly the specific impact of each area of expenditure.
- Leaders also make effective use of Year 7 catch-up funding. Through effective interventions, this helped most pupils to reach the required standard in mathematics last year. Most of the targeted pupils also made significant advances in their reading age.
- Leaders have put together a curriculum that is well suited to the aspirations and interests of pupils. Teachers make the content of lessons interesting across the curriculum so pupils are motivated to learn. A vast array of valued out-of-school-hours sports, music, arts and cultural activities widens pupils' skills and broadens their horizons.
- Leaders and teachers make especially strong provision for the spiritual, moral, social

and cultural development of pupils by threading opportunities throughout the curriculum and giving dedicated time weekly to personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons. In these lessons, pupils explore current affairs and moral dilemmas such as abortion and sexting. Elections of student councillors give pupils insight into the democratic process. The curriculum prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.

- The valued impartial advice and guidance adults give to pupils, including careers guidance from specialist advisers, is very effective. This results in the vast majority of pupils taking courses at key stage 4 and post-16 that are well suited to their needs. The proportion of pupils leaving the school to go on to education, employment and training is above average. An increasing number of pupils pursue apprenticeships, while most go on to further study at either colleges or sixth forms.
- An independent, external adviser offers effective challenge and support. While leaders and governors are by no means complacent, they would benefit from commissioning additional challenge and partnership with outstanding providers to keep them on their toes and to expose them to what excellence can look like.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a range and balance of skills and experience that qualify them for governance. Although the school's website does not comply fully with Department for Education guidance, otherwise the governing body keeps on top of statutory duties, such as checking that policies comply with statutory requirements and reflect the school's values. Governors make pay decisions based on teachers' performance. They check that leaders administer the budget properly and have helped leaders to eliminate an in-year deficit without having to resort to staff redundancies.
- Though governors recognise the main strengths and weaknesses in teaching and in pupils' outcomes, they do not know the school well enough. They are inclined to rely too much on leaders' evaluations without looking deeply enough for themselves. Leaders do not provide detailed enough information to help governors to challenge as well as they should. The governing body is very large and not all governors make a significant contribution to school improvement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders make the required recruitment checks to make sure that adults are suitable to work with young people. They keep an accurate record of these checks.
- The safeguarding policy on the school's website at the time of the inspection was not compliant with the latest guidance. Leaders corrected this during the inspection. Despite the written policy being out of date, leaders have ensured that staff receive the required up-to-date training so that adults know what to do if they have reason to believe that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Adults report their concerns, record them carefully and monitor pupils who may be at risk of harm.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Effective leadership has produced consistency in the quality of teaching in most subjects and in all year groups. Because of this, groups of pupils, including the most able, the disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or

disabilities, make good progress. There is a mismatch between the good quality of teaching and learning evident in lessons and workbooks, and last year's disappointing outcomes.

- Most teachers know pupils well, and so set work that is well matched to pupils' needs. Teachers are adept at setting different goals for pupils of different abilities in lessons, including the most able pupils, stretching them to give 'full marks' answers where possible.
- Most teachers question pupils skilfully, probing them to deepen thinking and to check understanding. In the best examples, teachers delve deeper and deeper to secure fuller answers. Teachers are alert in lessons to how pupils are getting on. They check pupils' work and provide help or further challenge where pupils need it.
- Leaders and teachers have created a positive climate for learning. Engaging content, along with teaching techniques that involve all pupils, result in pupils who are committed to learning and who persevere to the ends of lessons. Most pupils are confident to ask questions when needed.
- The strongest teachers have the highest expectations and exude enthusiasm for their subjects. This was evident in art and design, for example, where pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, responded with equal enthusiasm. The best teaching was observed in a range of subjects, securing the deep interest of pupils.
- Most teaching assistants know pupils' targets. Teachers share plans with assistants beforehand so they know how to support, in particular those pupils who have special needs and/or disabilities. The best teaching secures the commitment of pupils with lower prior attainment well. For example, in a Year 10 English set, work was well structured and offered good challenge, helping pupils to scan text and comment on potentially difficult literary themes in a Charles Dickens novel.
- A small amount of teaching is less effective. This manifests itself in teaching that does not take into account well enough the different starting points of pupils, especially the most able, so does not challenge them enough. Leaders know where the strengths and weaknesses are in their departments and work with these teachers to improve pupils' progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is good. Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and learning. They are proud of the school and wear their uniform smartly. Pupils are punctual to lessons, have the right equipment, and get down to learning right away without any fuss.
- Pupils socialise well together, boys mixing appropriately with girls, and pupils of different ages and cultures also mixing. The many girls who were questioned say that boys' use of abusive or inappropriate sexualised language towards them is rare. Younger pupils say that there are no places in school they are afraid to go. Inspectors observed Year 7 pupils receiving help with reading and spelling from sixth-form mentors in the library.

- An LGBT advocacy group of sixth formers has delivered assemblies and made it to the final of a national public speaking competition. Pupils who were questioned are open-minded about the protected characteristic of sexual orientation. Pupils are respectful and tolerant towards others.
- Pupils of all ages show a strong awareness of how to stay safe online. For example, they know about the dangers associated with social networking, such as online bullying and sexting. Leaders deal with incidents robustly and sensitively. They take a zero-tolerance approach to potentially harmful 'banter'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Inspectors observed negligible boisterous behaviour around the school at social times and many pupils whom inspectors questioned were happy that this is always the case and that they feel safe.
- Apart from the very few incidences of low-level disruptive behaviour where teaching is weaker, pupils behave well in lessons. Most teachers rarely have to manage behaviour because pupils' attitudes, the lesson content and the degree of challenge keep pupils interested and motivated.
- Recorded incidents of poor behaviour are low. Fixed-term exclusions are well below national figures. The school successfully engages the few pupils who are at risk of permanent exclusion in off-site alternative programmes of study.
- Attendance has consistently been above average and remains so. Rates of persistent absence are below the national average. However, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils with attendance below 90% is no better than that found nationally. While there are signs of some improvement because leaders are taking effective action, this rightly remains a high priority.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Up to and including in 2015, good progress in most subjects, from average overall attainment on entry to Year 7, resulted in above-average attainment by the end of key stage 4. For example, the proportion of pupils achieving five A* to C grades, including in English and mathematics, has been consistently above average. Unvalidated information in 2016 suggests broadly average progress, resulting in average attainment overall but below-average attainment in English and mathematics, especially for disadvantaged pupils, for whom progress was disappointingly weak.
- Overall, as a result of the robust leadership strategy and effective use of the pupil premium funding, the progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school is good. The weaker outcomes in 2016 can be attributed in part to the significant disruptions to leadership in core subjects and some weaker teaching that has now largely been eradicated. Work in pupils' workbooks across the age range evidences good progress for all groups of pupils, including the disadvantaged pupils and the most able.
- School assessment information reflects this picture of good progress. Disadvantaged pupils in Year 11 are on track for better attainment in 2017, reducing the difference between these pupils and other pupils nationally. The outlook for the current Year 10 disadvantaged pupils is stronger again. Differences between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in key stage 3 are small.

- Most Year 11 pupils who had high attainment on entry to Year 7 achieved at least the expected GCSE B grade in 2016, and many made stronger progress to achieve an A grade. A few achieved an A* grade. This represents overall good progress for this group. Throughout the school, most teachers challenge the most able pupils well.
- Outcomes in some subjects have been consistently strong. Pupils make especially strong progress in art and design because of particularly effective leadership and teaching, leading to well above average GCSE outcomes. Outcomes in business studies, health and social care, ICT, biology and chemistry have also been strong, and this continues to be the case, including for the most able pupils.
- Outcomes in mathematics over a few years have not been as good as in English and science. Recruitment of effective leaders and teachers has been challenging, a situation that prevails nationally. However, the appointment of a new leader and new teachers in the summer has turned things around. Strong teaching across the maths department is resulting in quicker progress for all groups of pupils, helping those who need to catch up to do so.
- By the time they leave the main school, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education or training. The proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, who go on to post-16 study programmes either in the school or elsewhere and into other training or employment is above the national average.
- The few pupils of Pakistani heritage consistently make strong progress in their learning, achieving well in a range of subjects, including in English and mathematics.
- Most pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the effective support provided by teachers and teaching assistants, who understand their needs.
- A small number of pupils who were at risk of exclusion attend off-site alternative provision. Most attend a local college, having entered vocational courses well suited to their needs. They are largely making good progress towards a qualification.
- The weak progress of boys in English by the end of key stage 4 in 2016 is not indicative of boys' achievement overall.
- The proportion of pupils entering subjects qualifying for the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) has been below the national average for the last two years, as leaders ensure that pupils enter subjects best suited to their aptitudes and aspirations. For this reason, the percentage of pupils achieving the EBacc has also been below average, though it was better in 2016 than in 2015. Leaders have plans to steer more pupils into the more academic qualifying subjects incrementally year on year and are preparing pupils in key stage 3 prior to them choosing their GCSE options.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The provision in the sixth form very much reflects the quality of provision in the rest of the school. Students are equally as well motivated and ambitious. They work hard independently and in groups, and teachers intervene effectively to ask probing questions and to check progress.
- Nationally published progress information over the last two years suggests that pupils

make at least as much progress as their peers do nationally on average in academic studies. Inspectors noted students' mostly strong progress in their folders and workbooks and in lessons.

- As is the case at GCSE, attainment in A level art is well above average. Progress is especially strong in vocational subjects, particularly business and health studies.
- Around two thirds of pupils who did not reach a GCSE C grade in mathematics by the time they entered the sixth form went on to achieve at least this grade in their resits. Very few pupils last year entered the sixth form without a GCSE C grade in English, and all made progress towards this expected standard.
- As in the main school, students have a dedicated hour of PSHE each week, which makes a strong contribution to their personal and social development. Learners present to their peers and build on the confidence developed in key stages 3 and 4. Most students experience time in the world of work and leaders and teachers promote employability skills.
- Careers guidance is also as strong as it is in the rest of the school. Students are satisfied that they receive good-quality, impartial guidance. During the inspection, students were receiving guidance from a representative of the University of Leeds on how to draft a personal statement and how to approach interviews. Almost three out of four students went on to university last year. Nearly all students went on to some form of further education or training. The destination figures for disadvantaged pupils are above the national average. Retention of students from Year 12 to Year 13 is also strong.

School details

Unique reference number	137521
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	10019315

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	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,711
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	270
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marion Bain
Headteacher	Kevin McCallion
Telephone number	01422 374791
Website	www.bbs.calderdale.sch.uk
Email address	jdonlon@bbs.calderdale.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 November 2011

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the curriculum.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about the curriculum.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at Calderdale College.
- Very few pupils are from minority ethnic groups and even fewer speak English as an additional language.

- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is a little below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average.
- The school met the current floor standards in 2015. These are the minimum expectations of pupils' achievement in English and mathematics set by the government.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited parts of about 60 lessons across most subject areas. Many of these visits took place with senior and middle leaders. During visits to classrooms, inspectors looked in pupils' workbooks and questioned pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors discussed with pupils what it is like to be a young person at the school. Pupils' behaviour was observed around the school, including between lessons, at breaktimes and at lunchtime.
- Discussions took place with the headteacher, other senior leaders, most subject leaders and four newly qualified teachers. Discussions also took place with three members of the governing body and an independent leadership adviser.
- Inspectors took into account 56 responses to the parent online survey (Parent View), and 76 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors examined documents, including school development plans, governing body minutes, performance management information and information about pupils' achievement.
- Records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding were scrutinised.

Inspection team

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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