

Inspection of Bennerley Fields School

Stratford Street, Cotmanhay, Ilkeston, Derbyshire DE7 8QZ

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 January 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Ofsted has not previously inspected Bennerley Fields School as an academy school under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections.

Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils have given an enthusiastic thumbs up to this much-loved school. They are very happy to attend. Staff are caring and supportive. Parents and carers appreciate the expert help staff give them and their children. One parent reflected the views of others when they stated, 'Staff are empathetic, understanding, caring, very supportive and work holistically to ensure my child has a great learning experience every single day.' Pupils say they feel safe.

Leaders have high ambitions for all pupils. They support all pupils to understand each other's feelings and to engage with other pupils and adults in a positive way. Leaders want pupils to play an active part in their community. The 'Beyond Bennerley' curriculum prepares pupils well for their next stage of learning and for adult life.

Staff support pupils to communicate their needs in a variety of ways. They know the causes of distress for each pupil so they can intervene early to help pupils remain calm. Pupils are polite and respectful around the school. They offer a warm welcome to visitors. They look after each other and play well together. Pupils are certain that if bullying were to happen, staff would deal with it quickly and effectively.

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

Leaders have recently redesigned a curriculum that meets pupils' individual needs. Most pupils are able to access subjects from the national curriculum at a level that is appropriate for them. They develop their understanding of English and mathematics through a well-structured curriculum. In a small number of subjects, leaders do not always identify precisely enough the key knowledge that pupils need to learn. This can limit how well pupils develop their understanding in these subjects over time.

A new assessment system has ensured that teachers' feedback to pupils is more meaningful. On occasions, teachers set pupils targets that lack the necessary precision. These targets do not always help define the steps that build towards the outcomes set in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans.

The more informal curriculum provides positive learning opportunities for pupils. From children in the early years right through to older pupils, this curriculum provides well for pupils' sensory and communication needs.

Pupils love spending time in the excellent outdoor provision. The time they spend there helps them to grow in confidence, develop their teamwork and life skills, and understand the importance of nature.

Leaders have prioritised reading. Staff use a variety of ways to introduce pupils to books and stories. Teachers use well-defined strategies to engage some pupils with sounds and symbols to prepare them for phonics-based teaching. All staff use a

structured programme of teaching phonics for pupils of all ages. They ensure that the books pupils read match the sounds pupils know. This ensures that pupils are supported to become confident readers as soon as they are able.

For those who require it, high-quality therapeutic support provides effective opportunities to develop pupils' interaction, communication and mental health.

Pupils benefit from high-quality personal development. They enjoy activities such as trips out to the cinema, visits to shops and learning in the local area. Many pupils engage in enterprise projects and community events. There is strong provision for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. The 'pathways to adulthood' programme in key stage 4 prepares pupils well for when they leave school. Pupils receive good-quality careers advice and guidance.

Pupils learn about different cultures and religions and how to value and celebrate difference. Pupils learn about democracy and voting. The pupils involved in the school council can explain how important it is for every pupil to have a say in how the school is run.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate the support that the school leaders give them. They say that leaders care about their well-being and are considerate of their workload. They appreciate the recent efforts that leaders have made to ensure that they are valued and appreciated.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff understand their responsibility to use their knowledge of the pupils to identify any safeguarding concerns. They know to report any such concerns immediately. The close relationship the school's family support worker has with families enables them to provide comprehensive support.

Those responsible for leading safeguarding are quick to act, involving other agencies when it is appropriate. They keep accurate records and have appropriate procedures in place to manage any allegations.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. Pupils are taught how to stay safe, including when online and when they are out in the local community.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not clearly identified the knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn and when in a small number of subjects. This limits opportunities for some pupils to develop their understanding securely. Leaders need to ensure that

teachers know what they should teach and when in each subject so that pupils fully develop their understanding over time.

- Leaders have not yet fully embedded a coherent assessment system that encompasses both the small steps of progress laid out in the curriculum and the targets contained in pupils' EHC plans. This means the targets that teachers set for pupils are not always the most important or valid next steps. Leaders need to ensure that the targets that teachers set for pupils provide accurate and timely steps that build towards the outcomes in pupils' EHC plans.

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	146052
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10254080
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	97
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mark Emly
Headteacher	Jennifer Wright
Website	www.bennerleyfields.derbyshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Bennerley Fields School is a special school for pupils aged two to 16 who have complex needs, including: moderate and severe learning difficulties; autism spectrum disorder; speech, language and communication needs; and social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Pupils are grouped into classes by curriculum stage, dependent on their needs.
- The very small number of children who are in the early years foundation stage are taught with pupils in the stage one nurture curriculum classes.
- The school has increased in size since it converted to become an academy in 2018.
- The school uses one unregistered provider of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, English, mathematics and PSHE. 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.
- Inspectors also looked at individual pupils' EHC plans and checked these against the school's provision.
- The lead inspector spent time observing pupils in the outdoor learning area.
- The lead inspector heard pupils in different year groups read books.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body and the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors considered a wide variety of school documents, including the school improvement plan.
- Inspectors took note of the responses received on Ofsted Parent View and considered the results of the Ofsted staff and pupil surveys. Inspectors met with several groups of pupils to gather their views.
- To judge the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors read the school's relevant policies, scrutinised the single central record, checked the school's procedures for the safe recruitment of staff and met with the safeguarding team. Inspectors also spoke with staff and pupils about safeguarding.

Inspection team

Dave Gilkerson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Julie Sheppard

Ofsted Inspector

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