

Inspection of a good school: Brine Leas School

Audlem Road, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 7DY

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 May 2022

Outcome

Brine Leas School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders, together with staff, want all pupils to achieve their best, both personally and academically. Pupils and students respond well to these high expectations. They enjoy their learning and achieve well in a range of academic and vocational subjects.

Pupils feel safe. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they can speak with staff if they have a worry or a problem. Pupils reported that any incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly by staff. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, are helped to understand the importance of tolerance and respect for others. They value the support provided for their mental health and well-being.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Most pupils have respectful relationships with each other and with staff. Pupils typically behave well in lessons and during social times. Lessons are rarely disrupted by pupils. Those pupils who struggle to manage their behaviour receive timely support. Sixth-form students act as positive role models for younger pupils.

Pupils and students enjoy visits to places of interest, such as the theatre and an outdoor pursuits centre. They spoke enthusiastically about the wide range of clubs on offer, including coding, 'Warhammer' and musical activities. Pupils enjoy competing in inter-house sports competitions.

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

Leaders, trustees and governors have developed a broad and ambitious curriculum. In key stage 4, the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects lies at the heart of the curriculum. Subject curriculums are well designed. Subject leaders have carefully identified the knowledge that pupils need to learn. Pupils and students have opportunities to build on their prior knowledge and achieve well. Teachers use a range of assessment strategies increasingly well to check what pupils and students know and to address any errors.

Teachers use their secure subject knowledge to help pupils and students broaden their understanding of key concepts. That said, some teachers in some subjects do not choose the most appropriate activities to deliver the knowledge that they want pupils to learn. Consequently, some pupils do not remember what they have learned previously.

Leaders have recently improved the systems to help pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read. Weaker readers are supported well by staff trained in delivering phonics. This helps these pupils to become more confident and fluent in their reading. Teachers place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' and students' subject-specific vocabulary. Pupils in key stage 3 benefit from a structured programme of reading for pleasure. However, some older pupils do not read regularly or widely as often as they should. This stops them from deepening their learning across the curriculum.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs identified swiftly. They have access to the same curriculum as other pupils in the school. Pupils with SEND receive appropriate support in class. Most pupils with SEND achieve well.

A small number of pupils struggled to adjust back into the routines after the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions eased. Leaders launched a revised behaviour policy and provided training for staff. Pupils told inspectors that behaviour is mostly good. The school environment is generally calm and orderly. All staff who spoke with inspectors feel that there are clear behaviour systems in place. However, a few staff who responded to Ofsted's survey, felt that leaders do not support them well enough in managing pupils' behaviour. Leaders are working to improve the level of training and support for all staff further.

The personal development curriculum is carefully designed and delivered from Year 7 to Year 13. Pupils and students develop an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships. They learn about other cultures and beliefs. This helps them to prepare for the wider world. Pupils and students receive helpful careers advice and guidance. Students in the sixth form appreciate visits to universities and information about apprenticeships. They are looking forward to work experience placements this summer. Almost all pupils in Year 11 and students in Year 13 move on to education, employment or training.

Most staff feel that leaders are considerate of their workload. Leaders are taking steps to reduce staff's workload further. Trustees and governors are highly committed to the school community. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. Trustees and governors challenge and support leaders in equal measure.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders take safeguarding very seriously. Staff receive regular and up-to-date training. They are aware of the signs of abuse. Staff know how to respond if they have a concern

about a pupil. Leaders work closely with external agencies, including the local authority and the police, to support and protect pupils. Pupils and students are taught about risks, such as sexual harassment and domestic abuse. They know how to keep safe when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, on occasions, some teachers do not choose the most appropriate activities to deliver the knowledge that they want pupils to learn. Consequently, some pupils do not learn aspects of these subject curriculums as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that teachers receive the training that they need to deliver these curriculums effectively. This will help pupils to know more and remember more.
- Some older pupils do not read as widely or often as they should. This limits the breadth of their vocabulary and their depth of knowledge across the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that older pupils benefit from reading widely.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 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.

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

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	136279
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10226227
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,417
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	302
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Janet Furber
Headteacher	David Cole
Website	www.brineleas.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 and 21 April 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The current headteacher was appointed on 1 September 2019. He was previously deputy headteacher at the school.
- School leaders use one registered alternative provider for a very small number of pupils.

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.

- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders, staff and the chief executive officer of the Brine Multi-Academy Trust, members of the local governing body, trustees and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to many pupils and students about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' and students' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation document, improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures and the school's single central record. Inspectors met with leaders, staff, pupils and students to check how effective safeguarding is in the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils and students about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' and students' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and the responses to the pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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