

Inspection of a good school: Blatchington Mill School

Nevill Avenue, Hove, East Sussex BN3 7BW

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 February 2022

Outcome

Blatchington Mill School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to be members of the 'Blatch family'. They are polite, friendly and welcoming towards visitors. They feel safe and know whom to turn to if they have a concern for themselves or for someone else.

Pupils enjoy their lessons. Religious education and personal, social and health education help them to develop an appreciation of equality and diversity. They cover respect, faith, democracy and liberty, as well as healthy relationships and sexual harassment. Recent topics have concentrated on the problems associated with gaming and gambling.

The curriculum includes a focus on enrichment and extra-curricular activities to inspire and enthuse pupils. The school offers a wide variety of clubs covering sports and creative arts, as well as involvement in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Pupils appreciate the many opportunities to develop their interests and talents. The detailed careers programme helps them make the best decisions for the future.

Leaders, staff and pupils create a positive environment in which bullying is not tolerated. If bullying or discrimination do occur, they are dealt with quickly and effectively. Leaders share an aspiring vision for ensuring that all pupils experience a high-quality education. This is demonstrated through strong shared values, policies and practice.

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

Leaders and governors ensure that all pupils follow a broad and ambitious curriculum. They have thought carefully about the knowledge that pupils should learn and in which order it should be taught. Leaders work collaboratively with partner primary schools. They have worked together on the literacy transition project and supported mathematics mastery, as well as offering subject advice for music, geography and technology. The school has a good working relationship with post-16 providers, but curriculum links are still being developed.

Leaders have designed a curriculum that is rich and challenging for all. The intention of the curriculum has been clearly mapped, but the implementation is not yet fully embedded in all subjects. Cross-curricular links across subjects are identified but not yet fully exploited to further deepen and consolidate pupils' learning.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge, and this is evidenced through their confident exposition in the classroom. They feel involved and engaged in the curriculum. They understand why topics are included and can explain the ordering. Textbooks and resources are well chosen to support pupils' learning.

Literacy and subject-specific vocabulary are well supported across all years. Teachers' use of questioning is strong, and pupils are constantly encouraged to provide fuller answers. The school is working hard to improve reading through engaging texts and additional support where necessary.

Assessment is variable, although teachers know their pupils well. In the best lessons, assessment is used to check understanding, embed knowledge, modify teaching and adjust the curriculum. In a small number of lessons, pupils are less clear about what they must do to improve.

Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified and supported. They benefit from joint planning among staff against shared criteria. Teachers have a range of strategies, including seating plans and the analysis of tests, to support them. High prior attainers are challenged with activities such as further mathematics and the higher project qualification.

Behaviour is well managed, with little inappropriate behaviour observed. Any such behaviour is challenged effectively in a non-confrontational manner. Pupils' attendance rates are improving, and the majority are punctual to lessons. Exclusions are reducing and used appropriately. Reintegration is carefully planned and monitored.

Staff say that leaders are supportive and mindful of their well-being. They appreciate the range of professional development opportunities available to them. They are knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures and appreciate the importance of safeguarding.

The members of the governing body understand their role and carry this out effectively. They ask meaningful questions at governor meetings and have a good awareness of the school because of their strong involvement and frequent visits. They actively support the school's ethos of inclusivity and diversity.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. The safeguarding policy is full and detailed, and aligned to both legislation and government guidance. Safeguarding training is thorough and staff are up to date with the most recent

training. As a result, staff know how to spot and respond to signs that pupils are at risk of harm.

Leaders work well with external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families get the help that they need. Pupils receive good-quality advice on topics such as sexual harassment and consent. They know how to keep themselves safe in the community and online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The quality of education is not yet securely and consistently embedded across all subjects. Further work is needed to ensure that the implementation of the curriculum in all subjects is secure and that links between subjects are utilised to develop pupils' knowledge. Leaders should continue to work to ensure that the curriculum intent and implementation are embedded consistently and securely across all subjects.

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 a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2013.

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	114606
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10211408
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,593
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Peter Sowrey
Headteacher	Kate Claydon
Website	www.blatchingtonmill.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Blatchington Mill School is much larger than the average-sized 11 to 16 mixed school. The school's sixth form closed in 2019.
- The school supports alternative provision for 14 pupils at seven registered education providers, two alternative providers and one tuition centre.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection the school had 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 English, science, geography and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject

leaders, visited a sample of lessons, talked to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and other staff, including support staff. They reviewed the procedures for safeguarding and looked at curriculum documents, school policies and other documentation provided by the school. The lead inspector met with governors and spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered 230 responses to the Ofsted Parent View online questionnaire and 160 written comments from parents and carers. They considered the survey responses from 332 pupils and 106 staff, as well as a range of surveys undertaken by the school.

Inspection team

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