

Bristol Brunel Academy

Speedwell Road, Speedwell, Bristol, BS15 1NU

Unique reference number (URN): 135300

Focused monitoring inspection report:

15 – 16 January 2026

The focused monitoring inspection took place due to concerns raised to Ofsted. Inspectors considered the following evaluation areas:

- Safeguarding
- Leadership and governance
- Curriculum and teaching
- Personal development and wellbeing

Ofsted was concerned by reports that a visit from the local Member of Parliament (MP) may have been postponed due to coordinated pressure from staff, and external groups, and, therefore, a potential insufficient observance of the Department for Education's 'Political impartiality in schools' guidance. The specific decision to postpone the MP's visit was not the subject of the inspection. The inspection sought to examine how the school is run day to day in line with statutory duties on political impartiality, curriculum breadth and pupils' personal development.

Inspectors found no evidence to substantiate these concerns within the school.

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, children are made safer and feel safe.

Leadership and governance

Leaders openly referenced the decision to postpone the MP visit, explaining to inspectors that there were concerns about the safety of children, staff and visitors, resulting from a threatened protest outside the school gates. The MP's visit was rearranged. The MP has visited 4 other schools within the Trust and leaders are keen for him to visit this one.

Following a request from the Department for Education, the Trust has agreed to commission an independent review. Leaders should implement any recommendations relevant for this school from the review as part of their continuous improvement cycle.

Inspectors' evidence shows that leaders and trustees demonstrate a profound commitment to providing an inclusive learning environment that promotes tolerance and respect for the diversity of modern Britain. The values of high expectations, equity of opportunity, championing all pupils, building resilience and togetherness (HEART) are the underpinning principles of the school's work. Leaders at this school ensure political impartiality in the curriculum and teaching. If leaders' high expectations are not met by staff or pupils, quick action is taken. Visitors to the school are welcomed. Leaders check thoroughly all visiting speakers, in line with Government guidance. Leaders understand the importance of regularly reviewing all aspects of the school's work to make sure their commitment and values are a reality.

Leaders prioritise improving the lives of every pupil, irrespective of their background, barriers to learning or special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff share this commitment by demonstrating it in their day-to-day interactions with pupils. During the inspection, 135 out of 160 staff responded in confidence to Ofsted's survey. They were overwhelmingly positive about being part of this school and shared leaders' values and commitment. This was also clear in the direct discussions inspectors had with over 75 members of staff. Staff, including those from minority groups, spoke of the harmonious and religiously tolerant atmosphere in the school. Like other members of staff inspectors spoke to, they felt safe and well respected by leaders, colleagues and pupils. No member of staff inspectors spoke with were aware of a proposed staff-led protest against the MP's visit. Inspectors heard that staff were proud of the inclusive nature of the school towards pupils, and there was often deep hurt expressed at the way their school was being portrayed.

This school has a comprehensive and carefully considered strategy for promoting and celebrating fundamental British values. Staff and pupils have a deep understanding of fundamental British values, the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion and embrace each of these values day to day. A detailed online staff training programme complements regular trust-wide training and events. Staff know the expectations of the school's code of conduct. Immediately before the inspection, school and trust leaders were informed of an alleged breach of the trust-wide code of conduct. They acted quickly when alerted. Leaders recognise the need to be proactive in ensuring that they are satisfied all staff and governors are adhering to the school and trust-wide expectations.

143 parents responded to Ofsted's inspection survey. They were overwhelmingly positive about their children's experiences, with almost 90% of those saying their child felt happy and safe in the school.

Trustees are knowledgeable, experienced, reflective and committed to holding people to account where necessary. Trustees and leaders routinely review policies and procedures in line with the latest Government guidance and/or legislation. Where relevant, the trust seeks external validation to ensure robust standards. In response to the events that

caused Ofsted to inspect the school, leaders had already commissioned external evaluation and support for further ongoing professional development for staff.

Curriculum and teaching

Leaders ensure that the trust's shared curriculum is suitably ambitious, broad and balanced. Inspectors found no evidence of partisan political views. Subject leaders work in a trust-wide network and adapt their curriculum to suit each school. This allows teachers to adapt to meet the needs of the pupils they teach. This is reviewed regularly. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and strive to make the curriculum relevant to pupils' lived experiences. For example, in a Year 9 religion and conflict unit, pupils study historical examples of religious persecution and use this knowledge well to raise questions about current, global conflicts.

The personal, social, health and economic education curriculum covers a wide range of age-appropriate topics and is well embedded. For example, in Year 7 English, identity is one of the first topics pupils cover and this evolves into an appreciation of cultural diversity across all year groups. In history, a migration unit considers different groups, including Somali and Jewish migration. In music, pupils look at how music connects to culture, for instance, through a topic on carnival and rhythm. Teaching the curriculum in this way means staff can be responsive to local concerns as they arise, for instance understanding different views on immigration. Staff do not shy away from dealing with contentious issues, but do so in a balanced and accurate way, discussing different perspectives and viewpoints. Pupils, in turn, respond to such debates with maturity and respect.

Personal development and well-being

Bristol Brunel Academy is a diverse and inclusive community school, where pupils are tolerant and respectful of each other as they learn and socialise together. Pupils and staff proudly celebrate this diversity as well as being proudly British. Pupils are welcomed warmly into the school, from a range of backgrounds, cultures and religions. Differences are celebrated through assemblies, and special 'pop ups', which cover different geographical locations, cultures and religious beliefs. This includes sharing perspectives about 'show racism the red card', Pride month, migration and National Holocaust Memorial Day. No discrimination is tolerated; this was evidenced in discussions with pupils and staff and in their responses to Ofsted's confidential surveys. Pupils are taught to respect and embrace diversity and demonstrate this in their daily interactions with each other, and staff.

Pupils feel part of a united, school family. They feel valued, looked after and appreciated. This was clearly shown in pupils' confidential responses to Ofsted's inspection survey as well as in discussions with inspectors during group meetings and face-to-face conversations. Pupils appreciate the support and care they receive from staff. This provides a true sense of belonging and helps pupils to feel safe. Pupils who are more vulnerable are nurtured carefully. These pupils access the curriculum in an appropriate and supported way through the school's key-worker system. The house structure and the 'backpack' rewards system encourage pupils to volunteer, mentor and participate in a

wide range of clubs. These clubs have been deliberately chosen to cover a variety of different interests and needs, including the LGBT group, the neurodivergent group and the school council. These foster a sense of belonging and give pupils opportunities to have their voice heard. Changes to the school uniform, including making the blazer optional and lifting restrictions on the colour of any religious headwear, have all come from pupil voice. Pupils are proud of this. They feel looked after and say that any concerns raised through trained peer mentors or the 'spill the tea' anonymous online reporting system, are quickly and effectively addressed. Any bullying, discriminatory language or prejudice-based behaviour is dealt with swiftly.

Additional next steps

Leaders and those responsible for governance must, in addition to the next steps raised at the school's last full inspection:

- Continue to keep under review the approach to political impartiality, with specific reference to visitors and events, in line with the Department for Education's 'Political impartiality in schools' guidance.
- Continue to take steps to be proactively assured that staff and governors understand and adhere to the expectations in the school's staff code of conduct.
- Consider the recommendations made following the commissioned review and take any further steps as may be required relevant to this school.

About this inspection

This inspection was conducted under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for focused monitoring inspections. The inspection was carried out because concerns had been raised with Ofsted.

The purpose of this monitoring inspection was not to determine grades for any of the evaluation areas, but to look into the potential insufficient observance of the Department for Education's 'Political impartiality in schools' guidance.

During the on-site inspection, 143 parents responded to the online survey Parent View with 122 comments made and reviewed by inspectors. 107 pupils and 135 staff responded to the Ofsted inspection surveys. Inspectors had conversations with more than 130 pupils and approximately 75 staff.

Lead inspector

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His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector

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Paul Williams

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About this school

School capacity

1160

Number of pupils on roll

1299

Resourced provision or SEND unit (if applicable)

No

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

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.

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