

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: The Bridge School

Coppice View Road, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham, West Midlands B73 6UE

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 April 2025

Outcome

The Bridge School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Andrew Seager. This school is part of Forward Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Simon Dilkes, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Catherine Canty.

What is it like to attend this school?

The Bridge School is a happy and enjoyable place to learn. Strong relationships between staff and pupils underpin much of the school's work. Staff are ambitious for all pupils and work hard to ensure that every child can be the best they can possibly be. Everyone is made to feel part of this inclusive school.

Pupils complete tasks in lessons with eagerness and are supported extremely well by staff. At social times, pupils play together happily on the swings or the school climbing frame. Staff provide popular lunchtime activities, such as art and sensory clubs. Pupils feel safe in school and always have someone on hand to help them if needed.

The school provides many wider enrichment opportunities for pupils. The school's 'Bridge to the future' includes 50 things for pupils to do before they leave school including leaf rubbing, gift wrapping and planting seeds. As well as this, pupils also take part in 'The Bridge's Got Talent' show performing songs and dancing. Pupils also visit a local water park where they enjoy bug hunting and mud painting.

Parents and carers are extremely positive about the school. One parent, reflecting the views of many, said, 'The staff are amazing and put so much effort into teaching. They make learning fun.'

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

The school has put in place a well-structured and ambitious curriculum. Appropriate pathways have been designed to cater for the range of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who attend here. The school has ensured that all pupils have appropriate support in place that takes account of their SEND needs. These strategies set out the smaller steps that pupils must take to reach their education, health and care (EHC) plan outcomes. Leaders recognise that this support could be further improved to help set out more precisely what steps pupils must take to make even better progress.

Developing communication skills and helping children learn to read sits at the heart of the curriculum. For those pupils who are at the pre-phonics stage, staff provide opportunities for pupils to listen to different sounds and hear stories. A variety of communication aids are used throughout lessons to help signpost children to activities or help them to express their feelings and emotions.

For many pupils, their increasing confidence and progress in communication skills leads on to learning phonic sounds and letters. Leaders ensure that the school's phonics programme is delivered consistently with appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their letter formation and writing. The school regularly checks pupils' progress in phonics. As a result, many pupils make strong progress in their communication skills and reading, given their starting points.

The school places great emphasis on helping pupils with their physical development. Pupils are routinely encouraged to use standing frames to help develop their core strength. Staff also use spaces such as the school hall, where pupils are encouraged to sit on mats and undertake different movements. Several pupils access the school's hydrotherapy pool to help improve their physical strength.

In many areas, the curriculum is delivered well. Teachers have a strong understanding of pupils' starting points and use this knowledge to help structure activities to meet their needs. In numeracy lessons, for example, staff use resources effectively to help pupils develop their understanding of number. On a few occasions, staff do not move learning on when pupils are already secure in what they know. This can slightly slow their progress.

Leaders work hard to ensure pupils attend school regularly. Staff know children and their families exceptionally well. Leaders ensure that they put in place all the right support to help get children into school.

The school's personal development offer is strong. A well-planned personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum ensures that pupils learn about key topics in an age-appropriate and timely way. The school celebrates religious festivals such as Diwali and Eid so that pupils get to experience cultural differences. The PSHE curriculum also teaches pupils how to stay safe, including when online.

There are a multitude of opportunities to broaden pupils' experiences and develop the necessary skills for life. Pupils participate in activities such as axe throwing, darts and zorbing. They also make regular trips to the local shops where pupils buy items and practise using money. As well as this, pupils visit a local farm and go for picnics in the nearby park.

Trustees and local governors have a good understanding of the school and carry out their duties well. They are fully supportive of the new leadership team and their renewed vision for the school. Generally, staff agree that leaders are mindful of their workload and supportive of their well-being. The overwhelming majority of staff enjoy working here and are proud to be part of 'the Bridge family'.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some instances, support strategies set for pupils are not as precise as they could be. This means that it is sometimes unclear exactly what steps pupils need to take to build towards end of key stage outcomes. The school should continue to refine these strategies to help pupils make better progress from their starting points.
- On a few occasions, staff do not move pupils' learning on in lessons when they are secure in what they know and understand. This does not allow pupils to extend or deepen their learning. The school should ensure that pupils are given opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills further in order to meet the ambitious aims of the curriculum.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection

is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, The Bridge School, to be good for overall effectiveness in November 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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	144043
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10378274
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	90
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Catherine Canty
CEO of the trust	Simon Dilkes
Headteacher	Andrew Seager
Website	www.bridge.fet.ac
Dates of previous inspection	14 and 15 January 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school in March 2024.
- The school is one of seven schools that is part of the Forward Education Trust.
- The school caters for pupils with SEND, including severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties and autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the chair of the trust and the chair of the local academy council. Meetings were also held with the chief executive officer, headteacher, other senior leaders, staff and pupils. They also talked informally to pupils and staff to gather general information about school life.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents. These included information about behaviour, attendance, the school curriculum and improvement planning.
- Inspectors observed informal times of the day to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View and free-text comments. They also considered responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Mark Howes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Dawn White

Ofsted Inspector

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