

Inspection of Bankside School

The Rhydd, Hanley Castle, Malvern, Worcestershire WR8 0AD

Inspection dates: 16 to 18 April 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils happily attend this caring and nurturing school. Staff greet every pupil with a smile and a listening ear. They take the time to help pupils get ready for their learning each morning by individually checking in with each pupil. This sets the tone for the school day and helps pupils feel positive about the challenges ahead.

Often, pupils join the school after a difficult educational journey. Many are anxious about attending school. Staff combat this by creating a warm and inclusive culture. All pupils learn about the five core 'rights and responsibilities' that underpin school life. Everyone shares, understands and upholds these. This makes school a calm place where pupils behave well. If pupils struggle, staff help them by taking intelligent and appropriate action to redirect and re-engage. This helps pupils to learn about, understand and manage their emotions and behaviour.

The school expects pupils to work hard and to do their best. As pupils transition into the school and reconnect with their learning, so their own expectations of what they can achieve increase. Staff work alongside pupils to build their confidence, celebrate success and develop their wider talents and interests.

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

Bankside School is led by a committed team and is well supported by the proprietor body. They check that the independent school standards are met. The proprietor body and executive staff provide appropriate support and challenge to leaders as the school grows and more pupils join. This is underpinned by a collective vision that all staff share. Everyone wants the best for all the pupils. Staff feel valued and know that their workload is considered so that they can concentrate on doing a good job for the pupils.

All Bankside pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan to address their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). When a pupil joins the school, education and therapy staff work together to gather information to craft an individual transition programme. They use this information to develop personalised targets for each pupil that are appropriate, shared, used and reviewed.

Each pupil follows one of three broad curriculum pathways. Within each pathway, pupils study a broad range of subjects at both key stage 3 and key stage 4. Staff assess pupils skilfully as they learn, for example, using catering lessons to assess pupils' understanding of weights and measures.

The school has given considerable thought to what pupils should learn in each subject. This is set out in a clear and well-ordered way. However, at times, this information does not highlight the important knowledge that pupils need to know so that they are well-prepared for their subsequent learning.

Teachers and support staff explain new learning carefully. They listen to pupils' responses and then adjust their explanations to help make things clear. They use a range of resources to bring the learning to life. Staff focus on helping pupils to see their learning in the world around them, for instance by growing their own food so that they can follow the journey from 'field to fork'.

The school is ambitious for pupils and the qualifications they can achieve. However, in some subjects, staff do not have the expert subject knowledge needed to realise this ambition. Without this specialist knowledge, pupils cannot make the progress they should in every subject. The school has recognised this challenge and has taken appropriate steps. For example, some pupils now benefit from additional expert mathematics tuition. However, there remains work to do.

The school has made reading a core priority. New pupils are assessed so that the school can ensure that pupils get support if they have gaps in their phonic knowledge. The school has trained staff and put resources in place to provide this support. However, none of the current pupils have needed this extra help. The school is promoting a wider love of reading. For instance, all staff have had 'story telling' training and all pupils make regular visits with staff to a local library.

Some pupils struggle to attend regularly. Often this is because they are particularly anxious about school. The school works with pupils and their families to encourage full-time attendance. In many cases, this work has been successful and helped pupils reconnect with school. Detailed plans are in place for pupils who are not currently attending full-time. These are reviewed and adjusted regularly.

The school is determined that pupils should develop and grow personally and socially. This character development runs through every aspect of school life. This is especially evident at lunchtimes when staff and pupils sit, eat, laugh and talk together. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum is comprehensive. Staff adapt this programme to meet pupils' needs and respond to the questions pupils ask. Through this programme, pupils learn about the risks that they may face outside school and how to navigate a complex world. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and has an appropriate accessibility plan in place.

Pupils learn about careers and the skills needed for life beyond school. This starts in Year 7 when pupils learn about 'who I am and what do I aspire to be'. Trained staff provide individual careers advice and guidance as well as information about possible 'next steps'. Pupils get to see and experience what the world of work entails. However, this offer is not as broad or as deep as it should be.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- The school has not ensured that the curriculum clearly signposts the key foundational knowledge that pupils need to know and remember at each stage of their learning. This means that teachers and support staff do not always emphasise the critical building blocks or check that pupils have the prerequisite knowledge needed to access the new learning. The school should ensure that all staff know precisely the knowledge that they should be checking prior to starting a new theme or topic and that they emphasise the new important content taught.
- The school has not ensured that all teachers have the subject knowledge and subject pedagogical knowledge needed in all the subjects they teach. This means, that in some instances, teachers are not able to help pupils make the progress they could. The school should ensure that all teachers have the detailed knowledge of each subject they teach so that pupils can learn the curriculum effectively and achieve well in any qualifications they take.
- The school has not created enough opportunities for pupils to have meaningful encounters with the world of work. This means that pupils are not as well informed about their possible 'next steps' as they could be. Leaders should ensure that pupils experience and learn about a broad range of careers to help them prepare for life beyond school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	149911
DfE registration number	885/6084
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10322627
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	22
Number of part-time pupils	8
Proprietor	P Bloom Limited
Chair	Richard Power
Headteacher	Jonathan Bell
Annual fees (day pupils)	£65,047 to £88,295
Telephone number	01905 388897
Website	www.banksideschool.co.uk
Email address	info@banksideschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is the school's first full standard inspection. The school was registered by the DfE on 24 August 2023.
- Bankside School provides full-time education for pupils with a diagnosis of autism. All pupils have an EHC plan. Pupils are placed in the school by local authorities, mainly Worcestershire and Gloucestershire. The proprietor body runs several other schools as part of the 'Options Autism' group.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school does not have a religious ethos.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The lead inspector met with the executive headteacher and the head of school. A meeting was also held with the regional director and a representative of the proprietor body.
- Deep dives were carried out in these subjects: English, mathematics, physical education and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector 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.
- The inspectors reviewed a number of documents and policies, including those relating to the curriculum, behaviour, health and safety, complaints and admissions. A tour of the premises was also conducted to check for compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Ian Tustian, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Chris Field

Ofsted Inspector

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