

# School inspection report

25 to 27 March 2025

## **Brown's School**

Hawstead Lane

Chelsfield

Orpington

Kent

BR6 7PH

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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## Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders promote and support the best interests and wellbeing of pupils effectively. They base their decision-making on consideration of how any potential actions are likely to impact pupils' wellbeing and academic progress.
2. Leaders have high expectations for pupils to work hard, do their best and behave well. Pupils respond positively to these expectations. Leaders' accessibility to pupils, parents and staff informs the support that the school provides to these groups. Leaders, including senior and subject leaders, engage in effective self-evaluation. This results in clear and definite targets for the school's further development.
3. An appropriate risk assessment policy is effectively implemented. Risk assessments are suitably detailed and regularly reviewed by school staff, and steps are taken to reduce risks to pupils. This includes leaders assessing and taking steps to mitigate risks to pupils who require additional support due to particular medical conditions.
4. Teachers and learning support assistants know individual pupils very well and tailor lessons designed to bring out the best in each pupil and ensure that they are challenged sufficiently to learn and progress well. Structured activities at different intervals support this individualised approach to meeting the needs of pupils. However, not all pupils with higher prior attainment achieve as highly as possible in external examinations.
5. The relationships and sex education (RSE) component of the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme is effective overall. It contains appropriate content in line with current statutory guidance, such as the importance of consent, managing relationships and toxic masculinity. However, the RSE programme's guidance about themes such as reducing the risk of unintended pregnancies or sexually transmitted diseases is not taught as effectively as possible.
6. The school has a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, and any incidents that occur are dealt with quickly and effectively. Incidents of poor behaviour or bullying are rare because staff respond quickly and follow clear procedures when they arise.
7. Pupils recognise the importance of respect for people's protected characteristics such as disability and gender. Their understanding of this is informed by their acknowledgement of their own and others' learning difficulties and social and emotional mental health needs. Pupils respect that their classmates are all different and have varying needs.
8. The introduction of regulation strategies and learning breaks has supported pupils' ability to recognise and manage their emotions, as they are encouraged to recognise their emotional state or dysregulation and act accordingly. Additional support techniques such as journaling and art therapy are used effectively for pupils who prefer not to speak.
9. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities ensure that safeguarding is effective. They work well with other agencies to safeguard pupils. Regular safeguarding meetings help the safeguarding team co-ordinate their work effectively to ensure that pupils affected by safeguarding issues receive suitable support.

## The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

## Recommended next steps

The proprietor should:

- take effective steps to strengthen the achievements of pupils with higher prior attainment in external examinations
- strengthen the teaching of the RSE programme's guidance about sex education related themes.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Leaders ensure that the school's work reflects its ethos of empowerment, particularly for pupils who have previously struggled or have gaps in their education. They have developed a curriculum centred on the what the school terms its 'golden threads' to integrate academic achievement with the social, emotional and mental health needs of pupils. This supports the school's aims for a holistic approach that is effectively communicated to subject leaders and staff. These impact frequent target-setting for pupils following the completion of short-term focused topics, as well as a range of strategies, such as meditation and other therapeutic methods, that are used by staff to encourage pupils to attend and actively engage in their learning.
11. The headteacher's recent decision to extend the school to house a new suitably resourced and staffed 'life skills' centre and new occupational therapy rooms supports leaders in their promotion of pupils' wellbeing. The refurbishment of the science laboratory has also led to an increase in academic provision, with the addition of chemistry alongside biology as subjects at the school.
12. The school leadership reviews their proposed actions and decisions, including in relation to the above recent developments to the school, to ensure that the school continues to comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. For example, leaders reviewed the school's accessibility plan during the period of refurbishment.
13. Senior and pastoral leaders actively promote pupils' wellbeing through weekly meetings with occupational and speech therapists, chaired by the school's clinical psychologist. Their decisions about the nature and delivery of the curriculum are centred around consideration of pupils' individual needs and how best to help them succeed.
14. Leaders recognise the need to be particularly vigilant for any signs that pupils may be at potential risk of harm, particularly in relation to online risks and influences. Leaders ensure that the school has a robust system for logging and following up on concerns. They work well with relevant outside agencies to protect pupils when necessary.
15. Staff receive training on completing risk assessments, including for off-site visits and for the assessment and mitigation of potential risks to pupils who require additional support due to particular medical conditions. Leaders and staff implement suitable precautions at drop-off and pick-up to support pupils' safety when travelling in and out of the school. Risk assessments are comprehensive and regularly reviewed to ensure their continued suitability.
16. Parents are provided with the required information through the school's policies and procedures, which are available on the school's website. Parents receive termly reports about their children's progress which highlight targets in each subject. Leaders complete annual reviews of education, health and care (EHC) plans appropriately and provide the local authorities with all required information relating to these.
17. An appropriate complaints procedure is in place. It includes clear timelines and a suitable three-stage process. Leaders maintain an appropriate record of complaints. Only one complaint was received since the previous inspection, and this was resolved at the informal stage within the appropriate timescale outlined in the school's procedure.

18. The leadership team takes measures designed to raise pupils' achievement and develop staff performance through effective training and rigorous evaluation of teaching and learning. Senior and subject leaders are involved in checking the quality of the school's work and this has resulted in clear and understood targets for improvement. Leaders thoroughly review the school's work and have an accurate understanding of what works well and what requires further development. Decisive actions result from this exercise.
19. Governors rigorously support and challenge school leaders at all levels to ensure they possess the knowledge and skills necessary to undertake their roles responsibly and effectively. Leaders ensure that policies and procedures are implemented effectively.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance**

- 20. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. Leaders carefully identify the key knowledge that pupils should be taught and when. The school offers timetabled subjects that cater for the therapeutic needs of its pupils, as well as their academic abilities, and provides a specialist environment to meet the needs of neurodiverse pupils. The core curriculum of English, mathematics, science and other subjects is supplemented with subjects such as 'life skills', 'mindfulness' and healthy living, alongside the provision of occupational speech and language therapy, under the guidance of clinical psychologists. Occupational therapy is integrated into the timetabled day, helping to improve pupils' co-ordination, movement and cognitive and physical functioning. One-to-one speech and language sessions support pupils with particular speech, language and communication disorders. Together, these measures support pupils' development of basic skills and motivation to attend and re-engage with their school learning after any periods outside of education.
22. Leaders give a high priority to developing pupils' linguistic skills across the planned curriculum, including through the use of keywords linked to subjects. Pupils effectively engage with technological, aesthetic and creative activities because these are tailored to the pupils' individual needs. Pupils are enabled to work on what interests them, at a suitable pace to meet their needs, in lessons presented in ways that capture their attention.
23. Pupils' particular special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified through individual pupil profiles (IPPs), and the strategies to meet these are discussed at regular staff meetings. Staff plan appropriately with consideration given to pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans, reading and spelling ages, and mathematics competency. IPPs are frequently updated and modified through staff feedback and review, ensuring that pupils' needs are well understood and met.
24. Older pupils gain a variety of nationally recognised qualifications. In 2024, almost all pupils achieved either English and mathematics functional skills at levels 1 and 2 or GCSEs up to grade 4. A small number of pupils achieved grades 8 or 9 in English, art and physical education (PE). However, some pupils with higher prior attainment do not always achieve the results in external examinations that the school expects based on their previous attainment.
25. Staff construct well-planned lessons. Lessons are well paced and utilise activities involving linguistic work, writing or movement, including outside the classroom where necessary. This ensures pupils are engaged and able to participate effectively. Suitable resources are used for each planned activity, for example flexible balls to demonstrate deep breathing, which encourages calmness and readiness for learning.
26. Teachers utilise good subject knowledge and customise their teaching to meet pupils' needs, with planned additional support provided for each pupil. Teachers know their pupils well and understand which approaches work best for them. They are skilled at gaining pupils' interest and attention by encouraging them to take pride in their work and maintain motivation. Some lessons are split to allow increased staff focus on individual pupils' needs, particularly during practical subjects such as design, art and food technology. Teaching promotes British values such as respect, tolerance and democracy and enables pupils to make good progress.

27. Teachers know their pupils well and understand which teaching approaches work best for them. They are skilled at gaining pupils' attention and maintaining motivation, including by encouraging them to take pride in their work. Staff make effective use of good-quality resources in teaching and occupational therapy. For example, they encourage pupils to use resources such as ear defenders and coloured overlays to help them access the curriculum or focus on their work without distraction.
28. A suitable assessment framework is in place. Staff carefully monitor pupils' progress and adapt teaching strategies as needed. They identify and address any gaps in pupils' learning swiftly, including by providing effective and clear verbal feedback on pupils' work. Marking and guidance during lessons inform pupils of how to improve their work. Pupils develop the confidence to ask and answer questions of their teachers because of the highly positive relationships between them.
29. Recreational activities develop pupils' skills in areas such as indoor and outdoor sports, gardening and cooking healthy meals. Such activities encourage pupils to reflect on ways in which they can promote their physical health and wellbeing. Trips to locations such as Kew Gardens and the Science Museum help pupils learn about how to use public transport, and a residential trip to France enables pupils to develop teamwork skills.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation**

**30. All the relevant Standards are met.**



## Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

31. The school fosters each pupil's ability to work towards their potential by building their confidence and emotional wellbeing. Staff are ambitious for each pupil, supporting them as they develop educationally and socially. Staff forge effective working relationships with pupils in a nurturing environment that enables them to feel secure, to find out what they can do and to develop their own identities.
32. The PSHE programme is effective overall. It includes teaching that utilises commercially published resources and matches these appropriately to pupils' ages and needs. 'Mindfulness' sessions help pupils regulate and understand their emotions. The RSE component of this programme reflects the requirements of current statutory guidance and includes appropriate topics such as managing relationships, consent and sex education. The planned activities often relate to topical issues such as toxic masculinity, bullying and banter. However, the RSE programme provides insufficient depth or guidance regarding sex education related themes.
33. The school teaches pupils about a range of different religions. The school also develops pupils' sense of spirituality through activities such as exploring the practice of deep breathing and meditation during mindfulness sessions. Such activities help pupils focus on the present and manage any anxieties.
34. The PE provision effectively promotes pupils' physical health and wellbeing while developing their physical skills and engagement in physical activity, with all pupils entered for GCSE examination in this subject and almost all attaining grade 4 or above. In food technology, pupils learn how to follow straightforward recipes, prepare a range of nutritious meals and understand how healthy eating contributes to positive physical and emotional wellbeing.
35. Occupational therapy sessions utilise a wide variety of resources to develop pupils' fine and gross motor skills, including the use of a swing and crawl tunnel, and a modelling compound to engage in fidget activities. These sessions enable pupils to experience success, collaborate and take pride in their achievements, for which they receive ongoing praise, in turn increasing their self-esteem.
36. Admission and attendance registers are maintained in line with current statutory guidance and contain all required information. Admissions are reviewed annually and attendance registers checked twice daily. Contact with local authorities takes place as required whenever any pupil joins or leaves the school at non-standard times of transition. A small number of pupils find school very difficult to attend due to anxiety. Personal attendance plans outline the strategies the school employs to promote attendance. These strategies can include daily journaling, varying start times, and the use of cards or lanyards that identify a chosen safe space to go to. The school maintains close contact with parents through daily telephone calls if a pupil is absent without a given reason. Leaders offer home visits for persistent absenteeism and regular updates from the clinical psychologist to support any pupils affected by this.
37. Supervision arrangements are effective. All pupils are accompanied to and from lessons by staff. Staff ensure that they are aware of which pupils may require additional supervision at various times due to specific circumstances or individual needs. Staff communicate well with one another regarding updates surrounding any specific requirements for pupils' supervision through behaviour

tracking logs and daily staff meetings. This communication alerts staff if a pupil requires a higher level of support than usual.

38. Senior leaders and governors regularly monitor all aspects of health and safety and ensure that the premises and accommodation are suitably maintained. All equipment, including for fire safety, is regularly checked and serviced. The school maintains an up-to-date fire risk assessment, conducted by suitably qualified external specialists.
39. The school has suitable facilities for first aid. More than ten staff have first aid qualifications, including a recognised trainer. Any administration of medication or first aid is conducted and recorded appropriately.
40. The behaviour policy is implemented well. Pupils are guided so that they develop skills to resolve any disagreements that they might have with each other. After a short time at the school, pupils learn to resolve differences between themselves with maturity. This is because messages about behaviour are consistent, and appropriate rewards and sanctions are applied fairly in the eyes of the pupils. Staff closely monitor interactions between pupils at all times. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour through initiatives that enable them to understand the importance of language and its impact on others. There is an effective anti-bullying strategy in place which actively prevents and minimises bullying at the school. If any pupil gets upset or stressed, adults help them to become ready to learn again as soon as possible.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing**

- 41. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

42. Leaders and staff promote inclusive principles and encourage pupils to value their identities and qualities and those of others. Pupils become comfortable expressing their feelings openly, including through showing recognition for protected characteristics such as disability and exploring their sexual identity. Staff use a wide range of strategies to develop pupils' understanding and appreciation of diversity through history and geography topics that show how different groups have been treated in history. This includes using specific pieces of writing that challenge their thinking about human and social issues. For example, in English, pupils study Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, while teaching in subjects across the curriculum encourages pupils to look at issues such as the effects of stereotyping on people of different sexes, cultures and religions.
43. Pupils develop their understanding about right and wrong through discussions about issues such as the effects of prejudice, discrimination and direct and indirect violence. They explore scenarios about how they might approach solving various societal dilemmas. For example, pupils consider possible miscarriages of justice and the issues raised by events such as prosecutions on behalf of the post office or the effects of the historical prescription of Thalidomide.
44. 'Life skills' sessions are designed to support pupils in developing the skills necessary to become independent adults. A wide range of topics is provided, from road safety to money management, as well as daily routines, including ironing and cookery. For example, pupils are taught how to use a washing machine in preparation for adulthood.
45. Careers guidance is in place for pupils of all year groups, with more purposeful and personal development in Years 10 and above. An individualised programme is in place, with all leavers interviewed by a careers adviser. This programme involves liaison with parents, prospective colleges and employers to ensure that pupils' choices of subsequent educational or workplace establishments are likely to meet their needs. Outside experts complement the school's programme with independent advice and guidance about colleges and employment. Pupils learn how to complete effective application forms and discuss body language and the importance of communication in job interviews. Almost all pupils in recent years have left to attend further education colleges.
46. Pupils develop their economic understanding through topics that explore financial aspects such as budgeting, saving and banking. They experience situations where they have to make financial choices, such as in technology, which involved pupils purchasing second-hand clothes for recycling and learning how to sew by hand or on a sewing machine as methods of saving money. Pupils organised a baked goods and sweets stall at the local village fete, learning how to handle money and interact with the public. They also engaged in washing cars and picking litter to raise funds for charity.
47. Pupils learn about public institutions, including those highly relevant to them, such as the national health service. They also learn about the works of Shakespeare and their contribution to English culture, and the contributions made by the home front during World War II.
48. Pupils contribute to the community both within the school and beyond. School council representatives voice views and suggestions that leaders consider in their decision-making, such as

the introduction of digital clocks. Older pupils mentor young arrivals weekly, keeping a journal of activities and discussions. Pupils learn about global water issues and raise funds to help solve them. For example, they are sponsored by friends and family to walk six kilometres while carrying six litres of water in a backpack as part of a national water charity campaign.

49. Pupils have timetabled sessions for The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE), which provides opportunities for volunteering and group work. Community activities involve pupils and staff who interact with and assist the people who live and work in the Chelsfield village community. These range from painting the village pavilion and restoring the local bus shelter to assisting residents in day-to-day activities such as gardening and household tasks. Through such activities, pupils develop a willingness to help others and a sense of social responsibility.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society**

50. All the relevant Standards are met.

## Safeguarding

51. Appropriate safeguarding arrangements that reflect current statutory requirements are in place and implemented effectively. The school's safeguarding team is regularly in contact with children's services and the local authority designated officer (LADO). Safeguarding records are detailed and include the decisions and actions taken by leaders to follow up safeguarding concerns that have arisen. The safeguarding team holds regular meetings to co-ordinate its work effectively to enable any pupils affected by safeguarding issues to receive suitable support.
52. Staff, including the school's safeguarding leaders, are suitably trained. Staff have received training in safeguarding procedures and know how to record and report concerns. Staff receive regular information and safeguarding updates to keep them well informed. They understand the principles underlying the staff code of conduct and what constitutes a low-level concern. They know the importance of and procedures for reporting any allegations or low-level concerns about adults that may arise.
53. The school carries out all required pre-employment checks on adults before they work with pupils. The single central record of appointments (SCR) that records these checks is suitably maintained.
54. Each pupil has two designated trusted adults they have selected with whom they can discuss any concerns that they may have. The school teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe, including when online or on social media. Pupils are made aware of the risks associated with getting involved with a gang or fanatical religious or political groups or individuals.
55. Governors effectively oversee the school's safeguarding policies and procedures and their implementation. They regularly meet to review arrangements for safeguarding pupils. Governors ensure that an annual safeguarding review is conducted and that leaders promptly implement any recommendations. They ensure that appropriate filtering and monitoring systems are in place. Leaders assure themselves through regular checks that the filtering systems are effective, and that staff and pupils are protected while working online.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

56. All the relevant Standards are met.

## School details

<b>School</b>	Brown's School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	305/6078
<b>Address</b>	Brown's School Hawstead Lane Chelsfield Orpington Kent BR6 7PH
<b>Phone number</b>	01689 876816
<b>Email address</b>	info@brownsschool.co.uk
<b>Website</b>	www.brownsschool.co.uk
<b>Proprietor</b>	Empowering Tomorrow's People Limited
<b>Chair</b>	Ms Elaine Lovett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr George Mitchell
<b>Age range</b>	11 to 18
<b>Number of pupils</b>	94
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	22 September 2022

## Information about the school

57. Brown's School is an independent, co-educational day school that caters to the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), specifically those with dyslexia and other learning difficulties. Founded in October 1967, the school is proprietorial, owned by Empowering Tomorrow's People Limited.
58. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
59. The school has not identified English as an additional language (EAL) for any pupils.
60. The school states its aims are to provide a holistic education offer that is accessible to all pupils and tailored to their individual needs. It intends to use an integrated therapy model to develop a love of learning amongst pupils, preparing them for adulthood and empowering them to achieve their potential.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

25 to 27 March 2025

61. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

62. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the proprietor and representative governors.
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

63. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

64. The school's previous inspection was by Ofsted. This is the first inspection of the school by ISI.



**How are association independent schools in England inspected?**

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **[www.isi.net](http://www.isi.net)**.

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