

Inspection of Dorothy Stringer School

Loder Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 6PZ

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 October 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff are ambitious for all pupils and have carefully considered appropriate ways to support them to flourish. They are dedicated to inclusivity and aim to reduce the barriers that can prevent pupils from achieving well. Increasing numbers of pupils are entered for the English Baccalaureate each year, and outcomes for all pupils continue to improve.

Many pupils enjoy school and learning. They feel cared for and safe at school. There are high expectations for behaviour. As a result, behaviour is typically calm and respectful across the school. Incidents of bullying are dealt with sensitively and effectively by adults who know their pupils well. However, a small number of pupils are less confident that swift action is taken to address disrespectful behaviour.

Opportunities for all pupils to extend their learning outside their curriculum subjects are extensive. The before-school sports clubs bustle with pupils keen to participate. In addition to sports clubs, a range of activities is available, providing something for everyone. Pupils also benefit from a range of external speakers to complement the learning taking place in lessons. For example, during 'Black Excellence Week', a national news reporter spoke to all pupils in assemblies.

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

The curriculum for all pupils is ambitious and wide ranging. Knowledgeable staff have thought carefully about the important content to teach in their subject and the order in which to teach it. In many subjects, the curriculum takes pupils beyond the ambition of the national curriculum. This is underpinned by a strong focus on all pupils becoming confident and fluent readers.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with the support that they need to access the curriculum. As a result, many pupils spoken to enjoy learning and achieve well. Many lessons include clear explanations and models to help pupils understand new knowledge. Where teaching is strongest, pupils' misconceptions are identified and addressed quickly by teachers. Despite these strengths, the implementation of the curriculum is not yet consistent across all subjects. This means that on a small number of occasions, pupils' engagement in learning is not yet meeting leaders' high expectations.

Attendance is monitored and tracked closely. The school is taking action to make improvements. However, for some groups of pupils, these actions are not yet having the desired impact.

Most pupils meet leaders' high expectations for behaviour in and around school. Many pupils are confident that lessons are not frequently disrupted by poor behaviour. However, a small number of pupils have more mixed views about behaviour.

There is a broad and detailed curriculum in place for personal, social and health education. The school responds carefully to pupils' needs and teaches age-appropriate lessons covering topics such as consent, safety and other aspects that might affect their daily lives. Pupils value these learning opportunities. They confidently articulate what they have been taught, for example about social media and free speech. They also talk confidently about the comprehensive careers programme that provides unbiased support and advice to inform decisions about their next steps.

There is a vast range of clubs and activities at the school that enrich pupils' experience. Pupils benefit from an extensive programme that provides them with opportunities to develop and celebrate a range of talents and interests. This includes the annual school production and dance shows that involve large numbers of pupils from across the school. Pupils enjoy a range of wider leadership opportunities too, including as mental health champions and well-being ambassadors.

Staff feel well supported by leaders. They enjoy working at the school and are passionate about providing all pupils with a well-rounded education. Leaders take into account staff workload when planning further school improvements. Governors know the school well. They have a realistic understanding of the key areas for development and provide both support and challenge to school leaders. The impact of leadership at all levels of the school is clearly demonstrated in improvements in outcomes. However, there is more to do to provide consistency across all aspects of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some school policies are not implemented consistently across the school. This leads to some variability between what leaders expect and what is upheld in practice. The school must check that all policies in place have been clearly understood by all staff to reduce this variability in curriculum implementation and expected conduct.
- Some groups of pupils are not attending school as regularly as they should. This means that they are at risk of falling behind in their education. The school must ensure that the actions that leaders are taking to improve attendance are carefully monitored and that adjustments are made quickly where actions are not leading to the intended impact.
- Some pupils in the school share concerns about low-level disruption. A small number are not confident that staff respond effectively to their concerns. The school must evaluate the approaches that leaders use to communicate important messages to pupils to assure them that their concerns are handled appropriately.

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	114580
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10304694
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,649
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Bridget Taylor
Headteacher	Matt Hillier
Website	www.dorothy-stringer.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 and 14 March 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses three registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information and engagement about approved technical qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- Inspectors held meetings with leaders from across the school. The lead inspector also met with governors, including the chair of the governing body, and representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, languages, physical education, geography, and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school and discussed wider development opportunities with leaders and pupils.
- Inspectors considered 340 responses to Ofsted Parent View, including 250 free-text comments. Inspectors also took account of 114 responses to the staff survey and 61 responses to the pupil survey. Inspectors also spoke with staff and pupils to gather their views.

Inspection team

Hanna Miller, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Mike Boddington	Ofsted Inspector
Mike Serridge	Ofsted Inspector
Daniel Botting	His Majesty's Inspector
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