

# Inspection of Blackfen School for Girls

Blackfen Road, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9NU

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Inspection dates:	11 and 12 March 2025
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Carrie Senior. This school is a single academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The school is overseen by a governing body, chaired by Stuart Fitzgerald.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Blackfen School for Girls fosters a welcoming and friendly environment. Staff know their pupils well and have high expectations of them. Staff provide daily care and support when needed. Most pupils are polite and respectful towards adults and each other. Pupils feel and are kept safe and know who they can talk to about any concerns they have. Bullying is rare but, if it does occur, is resolved quickly.

A growing number of pupils attend additional activities such as public speaking, art and volleyball. The school offers an ambitious range of residential visits including a ski trip to the south of France and opportunities for the pupils to perform at Disneyland Paris. Students in the sixth form take on leadership roles such as mentorship of younger pupils. These experiences enrich pupils' lives and help them experience a variety of opportunities beyond the classroom.

All pupils, and students in the sixth form, receive high-quality independent advice on their next steps as part of the exceptionally well-organised careers programme. Many pupils were effusive in their praise for the support they receive in considering future careers options.

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

Pupils learn an increasingly broad curriculum, which matches the breadth and ambition of what is expected nationally. The school has promoted greater take up of subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), including modern foreign languages. This has resulted in a higher proportion of pupils studying the subjects that make up the EBacc. In the sixth form, there is an impressive range of courses for students to choose from. Students feel very well supported and move on successfully to the next stage of their education or into employment.

Across the school, the curriculum is well designed and logically sequenced to allow pupils to revisit, embed and practise important knowledge. Content builds logically on what pupils have learned in their primary schools. Teaching is typically based on secure subject expertise. Questioning is sometimes used well to check what pupils have learned and to address misconceptions.

The curriculum in some subjects is not implemented with sufficient precision. In these instances, teaching does not check pupils' understanding as carefully. As a result, some pupils do not develop the same depth of knowledge and understanding and achieve less well, including in national examinations.

The school prioritises the importance of reading. Leaders are systematic in identifying pupils, and students arriving to the sixth form, who may require additional help. They provide an ambitious and well-structured programme of support to those who require it.

Leaders identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) promptly. Additional support is well matched to the needs of pupils. Leaders share

guidance with staff about how to best support pupils in the classroom. Pupils who attend the resource provision receive high-quality support to access and make progress through their curriculum. However, leaders do not systematically check that pupils with SEND who attend mainstream classes are being sufficiently supported. As a result, these pupils are sometimes not helped to access the curriculum and achieve well.

In most lessons, pupils behave well, work hard and show a positive attitude to their learning. Leaders have recently revised the approach to managing behaviour. Many pupils, staff and families recognise the positive impact of these changes. Around the school, behaviour is typically calm and orderly. However, expectations are not consistently applied regarding pupils' use of mobile telephones around the school and the timeliness of which they arrive to lessons. These inconsistencies cause some disruption to pupils' learning.

The school has improved communication with parents and carers. This is helping improve the rate of attendance. Specifically, the number of pupils who have been persistently absent has reduced significantly over time. The school recognises that there remain families for whom improving attendance and punctuality is a priority.

Pupils receive caring pastoral support. Staff know them well. The curriculum ensures that pupils learn how to keep safe and healthy, including when online. Pupils learn how to be responsible, respectful and active citizens with a secure understanding of important issues such as consent and sexual harassment. Many serve as role models for others in the school. Pupils spoke positively about the 'Discover Days', which build pupils' cultural awareness through, for example, visits to the Barbican.

Those responsible for governance are actively involved in the life of the school. They have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and have prioritised the right aspects to improve it further. Governors provide strong support to the school and discharge their statutory duties diligently. Leaders and governors are mindful of staff workload and well-being. Staff acknowledge this and are proud to work at 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)**

- The curriculum in some subjects is not implemented with sufficient precision. In these areas, pupils do not develop the same depth of knowledge and understanding and achieve less well, including in national examinations. The school should ensure that the curriculum is delivered with consistent rigour. This includes checking that staff have the necessary subject knowledge to explain ideas with clarity and make effective use of assessment to check understanding, identify and correct misconceptions.

- The systems for managing behaviour are sometimes not applied consistently. As a result, there are different expectations, including about pupils' use of their mobile telephones and arriving to lessons on time. The school should ensure that the expectations for behaviour are applied consistently across the school.
- The provision for some pupils with SEND who attend mainstream classes is not consistently matched to their needs and starting points. As a result, these pupils are sometimes not supported to access the curriculum and achieve well. The school should check that the adaptations chosen help pupils learn and remember more.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137965
<b>Local authority</b>	Bexley
<b>Inspection number</b>	10345936
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1483
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	300
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Stuart Fitzgerald
<b>Headteacher</b>	Carrie Senior
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.blackfenschoolforgirls.co.uk">www.blackfenschoolforgirls.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	17 December 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The headteacher took up post in May 2024.
- The school shares its site with a primary school that has a different unique reference number and was not in the scope of this inspection.
- The school makes use of three registered alternative provisions.
- The school has an on-site resource provision for 25 pupils with speech, language and communication needs, including autism.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- 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 headteacher and senior leaders. They also met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: mathematics, geography, science, religious studies and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work. The lead inspector also observed a reading intervention group.
- Inspectors considered the curriculum in some other subjects.
- 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 gathered the views of pupils, parents and staff through discussions and their responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

## Inspection team

Lisa Smith, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Tom Howells	Ofsted Inspector
David Lloyd	Ofsted Inspector
Olivia Page	Ofsted Inspector
Jonathan Newby	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Hall	Ofsted Inspector

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