

Inspection of Belper School and Sixth Form Centre

John O' Gaunts Way, Belper, Derbyshire DE56 0DA

Inspection dates:	20 and 21 May 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Belper School and Sixth Form Centre serves its community well. There is a great deal of mutual respect and trust shown between pupils, students in the sixth form and staff. Pastoral support and care are strong. Pupils are extremely proud and pleased to 'Be Belper'.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct. Pupils are trusted to behave well, and they do. Low-level disruption to learning is rare. Staff deal with any poor behaviour appropriately. There is a calm and productive atmosphere around school.

A positive buzz of learning is developing throughout the school. The school is aspirational for all its pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Although published examination results have not always been strong enough, increasingly, pupils are rising to the school's high expectations, and their achievement is improving.

Pupils have extensive opportunities beyond the curriculum, including a wide range of clubs and activities such as sports, music, theatre, and gardening. Many participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, as well as the choir, band and various school productions. Pupils access trips to places of worship, museums and diverse geographic locations. These important opportunities significantly enrich pupils' learning.

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

The school has improved since the previous inspection. Recent changes to the curriculum have raised ambition for pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. Pupils are better prepared for their next learning steps. Pupils practise and secure important learning so they can build their knowledge over time. The implementation of the curriculum has also improved and is particularly strong in English and mathematics. However, in some subjects in the wider curriculum, the teaching is not routinely suitably adapted for some pupils with SEND and some high-attaining pupils, including high-attaining disadvantaged pupils. As a result, some of these pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Students in the sixth form, however, enjoy consistently effective teaching.

Well-trained, expert staff swiftly identify the needs of pupils with SEND and actively work to meet them. Pupils with SEND also benefit from additional opportunities that support their learning, mental health and well-being. Staff are fierce advocates for pupils with SEND. They are determined for these pupils to succeed. However, although improvements are underway, there is more to do to ensure the curriculum is consistently well adapted to meet learning needs.

The school prioritises reading. There is a clear and effective programme of support for pupils who struggle to read well. The sixth-form buddy-reader support is great. Older pupils build positive relationships with their younger peers, build trust and encourage the love of reading. All pupils enjoy a wide range of culturally rich texts. They benefit from the

well-resourced library. They speak with passion about the importance of reading and of books.

Staff benefit from high-quality professional development and actively engage in local subject networks. They conduct research to enhance pupils' education. For example, recent efforts to improve pupils' oracy have had a significant impact. Pupils now demonstrate confidence in using complex language. This enhances their learning.

Due to the effective work of the school, the number of pupils who are absent has reduced. Pupils arrive to school promptly. However, there are still some pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, who do not attend school regularly enough.

Pupils and students in the sixth form, receive high-quality careers advice and guidance. Sixth-form students are particularly appreciative of the impartial advice they receive for their next steps. They feel extremely well supported and cared for.

The school's work to support pupils' mental health and well-being is a strength. Pupils can access many helpful activities, such as workshops to help them manage anxiety. Support is available from mental-health ambassadors and mental-health first aiders. There are calm spaces, including outdoors, where pupils can find quiet thinking time. The school provides pupils with a safe and happy place in which to learn.

Pupils benefit from a well-planned and consistently delivered curriculum for personal, social and health education. They develop their knowledge of how to stay safe, including awareness of the risks of online bullying. Pupils learn about a range of cultures and religions beyond their own. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain. The school promotes equality, particularly regarding sexuality and gender matters, effectively. Pupils said that this work helps them to feel comfortable and safe in being themselves. They behave with integrity and show one another a great deal of respect.

Governors have a great deal of knowledge and expertise. They show high levels of commitment to the school and to the community. They ensure that statutory obligations are met. They have an accurate view of the school.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate the recent changes and leaders' consideration of their work life balance. They feel well led and managed.

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 lessons in the wider curriculum, learning is not routinely adapted to meet the needs of pupils with SEND and high-attaining pupils, including the high-attaining disadvantaged pupils. When this is the case, pupils do not learn as well as they should. The school should ensure that learning is appropriately adapted across all subjects for the high-attaining pupils, including the high-attaining disadvantaged pupils, and pupils with SEND, so that pupils achieve well.
- Some pupils do not attend regularly enough and are missing too much time in school. As a result, they achieve less well and miss valuable social and wider curriculum opportunities. The school should further strengthen its work with their families to secure regular attendance for all pupils.

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	112989
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10379532
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1184
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	147
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Claire Lightfoot
Headteacher	Matilde Warden
Website	www.belperschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	22 and 23 November 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up the post in September 2024.
- The school uses eight unregistered alternative provisions.
- 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 (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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- 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 put pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography and art. 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 visited lessons across a wider range of other subjects. They visited the sixth form.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body and three governors. She spoke with two local authority representatives.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including education, health and care plans, to evaluate provision for pupils with SEND. They spoke with representatives of six unregistered alternative providers.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of pupil attendance information. They observed the behaviour of pupils in classrooms and at social times.
- The views of staff and pupils who responded to Ofsted's surveys were considered. Additionally, inspectors reviewed the views of parents through Ofsted's Parent View, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Jayne Ashman, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Jason Brooks	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Wilson	Ofsted Inspector
Debbie Ridley	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Vasey	Ofsted Inspector

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