

Inspection of The Bridge

Brentwood Road, Romford, RM1 2RR

Inspection dates: 14 to 16 November 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Outstanding**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils like coming to The Bridge. They feel safe and are happier than they have been for some time. The curriculum is adapted to help pupils to improve their mental health and well-being as well as catch-up with the learning that they might have missed. If pupils have fallen behind with reading and literacy, the school provides extra help so that they can access the rest of the curriculum.

The school has established a strong and positive culture with high expectations for all pupils to do their best. Pupils treat each other with kindness and respect. Bullying is never tolerated. If there is ever any unkind behaviour, it is sorted out quickly.

Pupils like their lessons and they work hard. Studies continue without interruptions because the school is a calm and orderly place to be. Sometimes, pupils need extra help to cope with their emotions. Staff spot these signs quickly and offer support in a considerate and respectful way.

Teachers understand the needs of the pupils very well, and they adapt the curriculum for each pupil. Pupils learn about careers and the world of work and make plans for their future.

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

The school has established an ambitious curriculum, which meets the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). When pupils join the school, they have often missed out on parts of their education, so the curriculum focuses on the most important things that pupils should learn and remember. Teachers check carefully what pupils already know when they start and adapt their approach accordingly. If pupils need additional teaching to improve their reading, this is put in place quickly. In some subjects, however, key knowledge is not as clearly set out as in others. The school knows this and has begun work to refine the curriculum in these subjects.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge, and a detailed understanding of pupils' individual needs. Leaders make sure that staff have the training updates they need to do their job well.

As well as academic subjects, pupils learn important skills and knowledge to help them improve their mental health and well-being. Pupils have the support of a mentor, who helps them identify personal goals and steps to achieve these. Pupils learn how to spot the signs that they are getting stressed or anxious, and they learn strategies that help them to cope better. If pupils need extra help from external professionals, such as mental health and well-being services, the school works closely with these agencies so that the support for pupils is coordinated and consistent.

Pupils behave exceptionally well. They treat each other and the school staff with respect and courtesy. Pupils often start at the school with very poor attendance. This quickly improves, as pupils settle into the welcoming and nurturing environment. Pupils say that The Bridge is calm and 'stress-free' and that this reduces their anxiety. In lessons, pupils are engaged and work hard. They enjoy contributing to class discussions and can put across their points of view well. Pupils are taught about how different people live their lives and the importance of tolerance and respect for other people's views and beliefs.

The curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils are taught about the dangers of the internet and social media. Pupils also learn about topics such as safe and healthy relationships, how to manage finances and how to keep mentally and physically well. Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. They receive advice and guidance on future career options and have opportunities to learn about the world of work, including through work experience.

The school offers a rich programme of activities to develop pupils' character, including opportunities to take part in different social experiences. For example, pupils have trips in the local community, including to the shops, the cinema and to go bowling. Pupils learn about artists from different backgrounds, ages and cultures and about different artistic influences and styles. Through the curriculum, pupils learn about different religions and beliefs and take part in cultural experiences and festivals. Pupils enjoy taking part in the sports and physical activities organised by the school and they learn how to improve their fitness and movement skills. Pupils are encouraged to be as independent as possible.

The proprietorial body has recruited a strong and expert panel of governors to support and challenge leaders. Governors take their role very seriously. They know the school very well and support leaders to work on priorities for continual improvement. School staff feel supported by leaders and governors. They feel that their well-being is considered, and they enjoy their work.

Parents and carers are very positive about the work of the school. They appreciate what the school does to support their child's education, and the significant positive impact this has on their well-being. One parent reflected the views of others in commenting, 'It feels like I have my child back.'

Leaders have ensured that the school meets the independent school standards. They maintain the premises to a high standard. Their accessibility plan complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- In a few subjects, the curriculum steps are not laid out as clearly as they are in other subjects. This means that in these subjects, pupils' learning is not as secure as it could be. The school should complete their work to refine these subjects, making sure that the key knowledge and skills that pupils need to know and remember are clearly set out in all subjects.

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

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| Unique reference number | 145510 |
| DfE registration number | 311/6003 |
| Local authority | Havering |
| Inspection number | 10286457 |
| Type of school | Other independent special school |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 27 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | The LIFE Education Trust |
| Chair | Louise Douglas |
| Headteacher | Maria Jackson (head of school) |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £18,500 |
| Telephone number | 01708 764 370 |
| Website | www.bridge-life.co.uk |
| Email address | mjackson@bridge-life.co.uk |
| Dates of previous inspection | 14 to 16 May 2019 |

Information about this school

- The school's last standard inspection was in May 2019.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- All pupils who attend the school have social, emotional and/or mental health needs. A small number of pupils have an education, health and care plan.

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.

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 inspectors met with a representative of the proprietorial body, the executive headteacher and the headteacher. The inspector also discussed the school with the chief executive of the Life Trust.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in English, PSHE and art and design. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects, including physical education, humanities, science and mathematics.
- 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.
- To check that leaders had ensured that the independent school standards were met, the inspector carried out a tour of the school site. The inspector also met with leaders and checked the school's policies, records and other evidence of compliance.

Inspection team

Gary Pocock, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Gary Rawlings

His Majesty's Inspector

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