

SIP (External Consultant) Note of Visit

School: Brookfields School	Date: Thursday 5 th and Friday 6 th June 2025
Visit: On site consultation	Length of visit: 2 days
SEND External Consultant: Dr Gill Barrett	School rep/s: Catherine Bernie, Eleanor Bukht, Sara Avenell, James Gearing, Josh Connick, Katie Gray.

Summary of key foci for the visit.

Full review of the school, looking at current state of play in relation to inspection frameworks.

Review of Actions/EBIs from Previous Visit:

- No previous visit made by this consultant

Context of the visit and preparation work

- Brookfields School closed 28th February 2025 and has reopened (1st March) as an academy – part of Ascendancy Partnership Trust.
- Last Ofsted inspection was a section 8 (short) inspection in September 2019 where it was deemed they continued to be outstanding. The previous school has a long history of always having been observed as very good and outstanding.
- As an academy converter the clock for inspection now starts again and the school would be due an inspection 18 months to 3 years time gap. This means that the school would be next inspected under the new framework.

Overview of Findings

Overall summary view

Under the current inspection framework I could not see a reason why the continued outstanding status would be lost. The leadership team have a very clear view about their individual areas of responsibility and can articulate about the strengths and weakness of their areas of responsibility and what actions they are taking to address any issues.

The strength of the leadership team has grown with the appointment of the SENCo as assistant head teacher to the leadership team, and the addition of the Safeguarding lead. Both these positions have been filled with very able practitioners who are able to free up other members of the team to focus more on behaviour, curriculum, teaching, and learning.

Some of the exemplary practice shown to me during my visit is:

- a. The Foundation curriculum, which has strong educational theory behind it. It is a different way of curriculum delivery and the leadership team are able to explain this well. However, they do need to understand that it is different and visitors may not grasp the 3 dimensional aspects and how the threads of educational theory are beautifully woven through making this a highly personalised curriculum which is not the norm in most schools, and although 'the norm' to Brookfields is a different approach and

educationalists may need time to fully understand how it works and pulls together so many different aspects providing a curriculum which can deliver the personalisation required to meet the needs of each pupils EHCP targets, and to deliver employability skills, PFA curriculum and enrichment.

- b. The school runs an exemplary work experience/employability programme across the school. Many pupils have a wealth of external experiences, resulting in a very rich destination profile for the pupils as they leave. Pupils from primary upwards happily engage in talking about what they want to be and do as an adult. A set of year 9/10 pupils were able to speak about dream jobs as well as being able to moderate to speak of other possibilities if their dream job was not available.
- c. An enrichment programme which shows high expectations for all. Duke of Edinburgh award was taking place the day I visited, and pupils were camping and doing an expedition (in the pouring rain). I met the Sports Leadership team of secondary pupils who are currently organising the primary sports day, and the team running the café truck.
- d. Preparation for adulthood skills is enhanced with the use of the Pangbourne House and market garden.

New Ofsted Criteria

Leadership and Governance

The SEF, School Development plan and key points raised by the senior leaders at the start of the visit are aligned. There is a strong understanding of the context of the school. The leadership team are continually wishing to review and improve and adapt to respond to the needs of the student population. (Strong)

The team has developed the rapid action plan, as they have moved into the APT. There are concerns after more in depth studies have been carried out on site repairs on the school by LA contractors over the past years not being fully compliant with current Fire, Health and Safety regulations. The new trust is making sure all work is carried out making the buildings fully compliant. (Strong)

The governing body is now in its infancy, but governors are in place and visiting the school. One was present at the meeting at the end of my first day. This will be an evolving aspect of the school leadership/governance over the next year. It is secure and those governors currently in place will be able to adapt to their new role and hold the school leadership to account. The trust would benefit from some shared working between governors as the three founding schools are now in place. (Secure)

The parents play an active role in the life of the school and staff and leaders have very strong relationships with parents and carers. Information about curriculum, and events are well shared. I spoke to one parent who was delighted with the progress her daughter had made and was no longer fearful of their future. (Strong)

Staffing has been an issue since COVID lockdown period. Agency staff have had to be used but this has dramatically reduced and recruitment is improving. The trust will be able to support this, and a joint marketing strategy would be helpful across the three academies to promote

and drive up the recruitment of quality staff. The senior team are looking for a number of ways to reduce workload and enhance well-being further. The staff are proud of working at the school and feel listened to and that they are well trained and supported. (Secure with aspects of Strong)

Curriculum

Brookfields has a curriculum which is expertly designed for their pupils, to address the needs of individuals and to ensure that they are ready for the next steps in their life. This learning may not be the traditional 'knowledge' but it is skills, strategies, repetition of routines and self-regulation. It has been expertly designed and is continually responding to the needs of the pupils and the wider knowledge base of the special needs education. Rich in theory it draws together quality practice and some which has been researched and designed by the school practitioners. The implementations of the strands and the foundation curriculum in the exploration strand is evidence of how the curriculum evolves and is renewed. It is truly personalised in a way that many other curriculums are not and uses a number of frameworks to help staff design targets and provide learning vehicles to develop the pupils related to their targeted need for that term. Small steps are in place. (This is an area of exemplary practice)

Leaders do need to ensure that during learning walks that all staff are confident about what the focus of learning is and how the pupil is achieving generally and on that day. Spikey progression should be acknowledged, and staff should be clear on what they are doing to ensure any current 'blips' in progress are quickly addressed holistically if required. (Secure)

Outcomes for pupils are very positive and well tracked. Targets are individually set and this system is well reviewed with final Head teacher sign off. (Strong)

In future visits I would like to follow the progress after target setting into daily delivery to understand more of how all staff use the complete curriculum to deliver and sequence learning activities to address all targets. How staff plan and implement across a term I was not able to observe during this visit.

Developing Teaching

Leaders have an accurate and well-informed understanding of the quality of teaching. They know where the strengths and weaknesses are and have plans in place to address these. The school has a strong ethos personalisation of learning and has very clear outcomes and are very open to new thinking and research to continuously improve the quality of teaching. Asking the right types of questions during learning walks is a focus and ensuring why this type of learning activity is important to the pupil now and how this is sequenced is being asked. (Strong – although I will need further clarification on the inspection framework to understand what they will deem to be 'nuanced understanding'. The Head teacher and her team are very nuanced in backing educational theory to practice.)

There is a rich programme of CPD offered which goes beyond the mandatory training required in a special school. Intensive Interaction, REACH programme, Learning to Learn, are some of the additional training recently offered. (Strong)

Achievement in national tests and examinations, where applicable.

This is not applicable for Brookfield pupils as all are beyond national curriculum levels and this is not deemed an appropriate curriculum for pupils. A few do access functional skills.

This is an area which the leadership team are open to discussion, and would welcome shared resourcing for any pupils who would wish to work towards national accreditation.

Achievement across the curriculum

Pupils achieve strongly across their personalised curriculum and their achievement is sustained and provides access to the next stage in their development and life. (Strong)

Pupils are encouraged to engage in the learning of reading, writing, mathematics and language /communication. Communication aids were evident around the school and there are some lovely large-scale boards for pupils at break times outside. SaLT works closely with classroom staff, and this was observed during a visit into the exploration class. The literacy co-ordinator has clear programmes and direction for the school and incorporates phonics with a more multi-sensory approach ensuring that appropriate pedagogy is aligned to each pupils needs. I was impressed with the reading spine which shows a commitment of the school to find age/ability appropriate literacy resources for all topics the school curriculum follows. (Strong- but the inspection criteria is not special school friendly here)

Progress is well tracked in the school, using Earwig alongside a specially designed tracker for EHCP monitoring. The system is aligned to the annual review cycle for each pupil and at any point in time the leadership team can see who is meeting targets and who is not. If the timespan is running out the system raises those pupils who are at risk of not achieving. This is another example of exemplary practice. The system is clear about a two-level reporting criteria being used – achieved or not and then gives risk factors throughout the year lined to timespan of each pupils review cycle. (Exemplary)

Behaviour and Attitudes

The behaviour around school on the two days of my visit was extremely positive. There are a number of pupils displaying complex behaviours, but staff address these in a positive and calm manner. The school follows the ethos of Therapeutic Thinking and PROACT-SCIPr-UK. This is very evident around school. Staff are not using physical direction at all. Understanding the pupil and their needs was very clear. Engagement in learning was doing the work for the staff, alongside the very positive and proactive relationships staff have with pupils.

(Strong – positive behaviour management culture, strong positive relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils. There is strong engagement in learning activities which keeps pupils on task and less likely to engage more restrictive behaviours.)

Attendance

School attendance rate for Primary and Secondary is 91% with 84% for sixth form. Attendance for the main school population is therefore above the special school average. Although sixth

form rate is not concerning and would be similar or higher than other sixth forms further work could be done to see if any thing could be done differently.

(Strong – high rates showing that relationships are strong with families and leaders are reflective and develop flexible ways to ensure pupils can attend school.)

Personal development and well-being

Broad, engaging, inclusive programme on offer. Well suited opportunities are available which are also ambitious and aspirational e.g. Sports leaders and Duke of Edinburgh both witnessed.

The school does have an exemplary careers and work experience programme which is being implemented throughout the secondary and sixth form and has been adapted recently to fully embed into the primary provision as well.

Pupils engage enthusiastically about enrichment activities and were able to give a number of examples about what school offers them and things they are looking forward to doing.

Pastoral support – there are strong relationships with parents and other professionals involved with the pupils. The new SENCo is giving strong challenge to the local authority about the quality of the EHCP and the funding/resources available for each pupil.

Are the opportunities offered tracked a crossed the school? Do leaders know whether all pupils are accessing a board programme?

(This area is strong with exemplary practice in the life skills, work experience and careers education.)

Inclusion

The ethos of the school is well developed with therapeutic thinking well demonstrated. What leaders said I would see – I saw across all areas of the school. Engagement is very high. Personalisation is extremely strong in the school ethos and plans for pupils in the classroom demonstrate the commitment to this personalisation with no targets or strategies being generic.

How does the school monitor sub-groups within school, are there any patterns in EAL, Pupil Premium, and Looked after children?

(Strong with the element of exemplary in the therapeutic thinking ethos supported by the REACH curriculum)

Early Years

The school understands the importance of giving students the right start. The school has renewed the curriculum, giving staff training again as it felt the methodology had faded as the original staff had left. Very positive interactions observed between staff and pupils. Senior staff are able to demonstrate good practice. Observed a pupil with mobility and VI difficulties engaging well in the sensory light room, with equipment and member of staff which had recently been demonstrated by Headteacher.

There are a variety of communications aids being used with all pupils. SaLT is working closely with individual pupils in class and modelling practice for other staff in the room.

Exploration session observed was strong, renewed curriculum is strong. I would like to see how the assessment works and how target setting is linked.

Sixth Form

16-19 curriculum and delivery is focused well on PFA. Observed Maths lesson where the pupils had been preparing for shopping trip, use of money and costs. Maths lessons also have good routines and games are built into the sessions which re-enforce number patterns. This session observed had good differentiation and support given.

Careers and life skills is well supported by the work experiences and Pangbourne House/community visits. The destinations for pupils are very positive with employment, college and internships. There are strong partnerships with employers in the local area, these are realistic while being aspirational. Pupils across the school speak extremely positively about the careers/employment they wish to have. They speak about their dream job but also have a back up plan. No pupil does not seem positive about their future and what they will be able to achieve.

This is strong, as already stated careers and work experience are exemplary. Development of further partnerships across the trust might be a way to offer greater flexibility for some students who might wish to have qualifications. The school is thinking about on-line and tutors being able to offer this if requested.

Safeguarding

Culture – Standard Met – all pupils are kept safe and good systems are in place, known, and well monitored by the senior team weekly. Staff are vigilant and respond effectively. A Governor for safeguarding is in place and does visit.

Information – Standard Met – Information is shared appropriately and systems well implemented. The cases are graded, and follow-up can be weekly, fortnightly or tersely depending on low of severity. Very positive working relationships with LADO and social workers.

Training is in place and refreshed regularly. School is working on how child on child incidents are dealt with and recorded, especially for those pupils who do not have capacity to understand the impact of some of their actions. This could be a trust wide approach to regulate this.

Summary

Brookfields is a strong school overall with clear areas of exemplary practice. The relationships and therapeutic ethos are very strong and very evident.

The curriculum is unique and highly personalised. Being so different the school does need to be well prepared to be able to explain the process and ensure that teaching staff explain it in the same way. Paperwork is in place, which is clear, a quick summary bringing together all elements would be useful and is currently built into the training materials.

Planning for next visit

1. To do a pupil pursuit tracking the curriculum setting/assessment and the delivery.
2. To compare base data of students with curriculum offer and long term outcomes – this would also help to compare and contrast learning journeys and outcomes across the trust.

Further action

As this was an overall picture visit – points have been made in each section which I hope are helpful and can be built into self review and the further school improvement plan.

Brookfields School also offers plenty of opportunity for research work especially around therapeutic ethos and personalised curriculum which could be of great benefit to the trust and to further outreach work of the trust.

Signed:  Report completed: 13th June 2025