

Bracken Lane Primary Academy

Address: Bracken Lane, Retford, Nottinghamshire, DN22 7EU

Unique reference number (URN): 144526

Inspection report: 30 June 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

Pupils achieve well across the curriculum. They develop secure knowledge and skills over time and apply them confidently in different subjects. Pupils recall prior learning impressively, showing that important knowledge is remembered and built on successfully. They produce high-quality work and take pride in its presentation.

Pupils develop knowledge of reading, writing and mathematics that provides strong foundations for their future learning. They become fluent readers and develop confidence in writing and mathematics. Over time, pupils achieve above-average outcomes in national assessments. Outcomes in reading, mathematics and the Year 4 multiplication tables check are consistently above average.

Disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who face other barriers to learning, achieve well from their starting points. Leaders identify gaps quickly and provide impactful support so that pupils keep up with their learning. As a result, the gap between disadvantaged and other pupils' achievement has quickly narrowed. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders place a high priority on pupils' attendance. They monitor attendance closely, identify concerns quickly and work well with families and external agencies to help them overcome barriers to attending school. Staff understand pupils' individual circumstances and provide timely support, when it is needed. This helps pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to attend well. Pupils' attendance is consistently above national averages, while persistent absence remains low. Where pupils require part-time timetables, these are used appropriately, reviewed often and support pupils to return successfully to full-time education.

Pupils behave well and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They understand and consistently live out the school's 'Bracken Lane behaviours', which are embedded from the early years onwards. These shared expectations help pupils develop respect, responsibility and perseverance in their learning and relationships. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm, respectful and supportive. Pupils are courteous, cooperate well with one another and take pride in their school and their work. They say that bullying is rare and are confident that staff deal with any concerns promptly and effectively. Leaders make appropriate adjustments for the few pupils who need additional support with behaviour. As a result, the school is calm, orderly and inclusive, enabling pupils to learn successfully.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

Leaders have refined the curriculum since the previous inspection. They use their knowledge of how well pupils learn to strengthen the curriculum and teaching. The curriculum is carefully sequenced so that pupils build knowledge securely over time and are

well prepared for future learning. Recent improvements to the teaching of writing, have increased opportunities for pupils to write at length, edit and redraft their work.

Reading sits at the heart of the curriculum. Leaders ensure that staff teach the school's phonics programme with consistency and expertise. Staff match books carefully to pupils' reading knowledge and provide timely support for pupils who need to catch up. From the early years onwards, communication and language are prioritised. Across the school, pupils revisit important knowledge so that they remember and apply what they have learned.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge and explain new learning clearly. They use checks on pupils' understanding effectively to identify misconceptions and adapt teaching when pupils need additional support. A consistent focus on vocabulary and oracy helps pupils communicate their ideas confidently across the curriculum.

The curriculum is taught consistently well. Teachers understand pupils' individual needs and provide support when needed. This enables disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who face other barriers to learning to access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers.

Early years

Strong standard 

Leaders have a clear vision for the early years and use their secure understanding of children's starting points to shape the curriculum. They place communication and language at the heart of learning because they know many children enter the Nursery with skills that are below those typically expected for their age. The curriculum is carefully sequenced so that children develop the knowledge and skills they need for the next stage of their education.

Staff make the most of every opportunity to develop children's language. High-quality interactions, thoughtful questioning and effective modelling help children extend their vocabulary and thinking throughout the day. Staff carefully check what children know and can do. They use this understanding to identify children's next steps and adapt learning so that children make excellent progress through the curriculum during their time in the early years.

Children are happy, confident and eager to learn. They develop independence, cooperate well with others and show resilience when learning. Warm relationships help children feel safe and secure. Leaders work closely with families to support smooth transitions into school and provide impactful support for children who need additional help. As a result, children achieve well from their starting points and are very well prepared for Year 1.

Inclusion

Strong standard 

Leaders have created an inclusive culture where pupils who face barriers to learning receive timely and carefully tailored support. They identify emerging needs quickly. Leaders carefully review the impact of the strategies they use to ensure that pupils receive the right level of support at the right time. As a result, pupils access the curriculum successfully and are supported to achieve alongside their peers.

The pupil premium strategy is carefully targeted so that disadvantaged pupils receive relevant and meaningful support. Leaders know the additional barriers faced by disadvantaged pupils, particularly those who also have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and use funding thoughtfully to remove these. Pupils benefit from academic support alongside wider opportunities, including residential visits, music tuition and forest school.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils with SEND. Teachers adapt learning well. For example, they make use of specialist advice, assistive technology and carefully planned support. Staff are well trained and understand pupils' individual needs. Leaders check pupils' progress closely and hold teachers to account for the impact of the support they provide.

Leaders work effectively with social care, the virtual school and a range of external agencies to support pupils and families. This coordinated approach helps reduce barriers to learning and enables pupils who may be vulnerable to participate fully in school life.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders have a clear vision for the school and use their secure understanding of its strengths and priorities to bring about continual improvement. They evaluate the impact of their work carefully and refine the curriculum, teaching and wider provision so that pupils achieve well. High expectations underpin every aspect of the school's work and create a culture where pupils and staff thrive.

Governors and trust leaders know the school well. They provide effective support and challenge and hold leaders to account for the quality of curriculum and teaching and pupils' wider experiences. Together, they ensure that funding is used effectively and that they fulfil their responsibilities such as in relation to setting the school's vision and values.

Leaders invest in staff development. Professional learning is carefully matched to school priorities and staff take up the opportunities that leaders provide to develop their expertise and take on additional responsibilities. Staff value the support they receive and speak positively about leaders' commitment to their wellbeing and workload.

Leaders have established positive relationships with parents and carers, the local community and other professionals. They listen carefully to feedback and respond thoughtfully. Effective collaboration across the trust, and with external partners, strengthens the school's work and helps leaders continue to improve the quality of provision and care provided for pupils.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders have designed a carefully sequenced personal development programme that reflects the needs of the school community. They review it regularly and adapt it when pupils' needs change. Pupils benefit from high-quality relationships, sex and health education, alongside learning about healthy lifestyles, mental health and online safety. They understand the importance of respectful relationships and know how to keep themselves safe.

Pupils develop confidence, resilience and independence through a wide range of experiences beyond the classroom. Educational visits, residential experiences, outdoor learning and leadership responsibilities help pupils develop their character and prepare them well for the next stage of their education. Leaders track pupils' participation carefully to ensure that all groups, including disadvantaged pupils, benefit fully from these opportunities.

Pupils have a secure understanding of the protected characteristics and the fundamental British values. They explain how these shape everyday life in school and show respect for people whose experiences differ from their own. They are confident that any concerns, including bullying, are dealt with quickly and effectively.

Leaders know pupils exceptionally well and identify those who need additional pastoral support. They work closely with families and external agencies to provide timely help. As a result, pupils feel valued, develop a strong sense of belonging and are well prepared for life beyond primary school.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils are proud to belong to this welcoming school. They feel safe, happy and valued. Staff know pupils well and build warm, trusting relationships with them. Pupils know that adults will listen if they have a worry. They are confident that any bullying is dealt with quickly and fairly.

Pupils behave well. They are polite, respectful and considerate of others. Calm routines begin in the early years and continue throughout the school. Pupils move around the school sensibly and work together cooperatively. They enjoy coming to school and attend regularly. Pupils who need additional support with their attendance or behaviour receive it quickly. This helps them to take part in each aspect of school life.

Pupils achieve well. They develop secure knowledge and skills across the curriculum and remember what they have learned. They read confidently, communicate their ideas clearly and produce work which they are proud of. Disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who face other barriers to learning achieve well because staff understand their needs and provide personalised support.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of opportunities beyond the classroom. They take on leadership responsibilities, attend residential visits, experience forest school and contribute to the life of the school community. These experiences help pupils develop confidence, resilience and independence. Pupils leave the school well prepared for the next stage of their education and for life in modern Britain.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure continued refinement and improvement to the implementation of their curriculum to sustain and raise further the achievement of all pupils, particularly

disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

About this inspection

This school is part of Diverse Academies Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), David Cotton, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Schwarz.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors held meetings with the executive principal, principal, assistant principal, special educational needs coordinator, early years leader, governors and members of the trust board, including the chief executive officer. They also spoke to a range of teaching and non-teaching staff and a wide range of pupils.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not currently use any form of alternative provision.

The executive principal is Lucy Spacey

Principal: Helen Cawkill

Lead inspector:

Stacey Carr, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Karen Slack, Ofsted Inspector

Tim Leah, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 30 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

231

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

210

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

17.59%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

0.43%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

12.12%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Below average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	73%	61%	Above
2024/25 (final)	72%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	70%	61%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	77%	60%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	83%	74%	Above
2024/25 (final)	86%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	77%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	87%	73%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	80%	72%	Above
2024/25 (final)	79%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	80%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	80%	71%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	85%	73%	Above
2024/25 (final)	86%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	83%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	87%	73%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	52%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	44%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	50%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	63%	44%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	70%	62%	Above
2024/25 (final)	67%	63%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	50%	62%	Below
2022/23 (final)	88%	60%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	61%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	56%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	67%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	63%	58%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	65%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	56%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	67%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	75%	59%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	52%	68%	-15 pp
2024/25 (final)	44%	69%	-25 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	67%	-17 pp
2022/23 (final)	63%	66%	-4 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	70%	80%	-10 pp
2024/25 (final)	67%	81%	-14 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	80%	-30 pp
2022/23 (final)	88%	78%	9 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	61%	78%	-17 pp
2024/25 (final)	56%	78%	-23 pp
2023/24 (final)	67%	78%	-11 pp
2022/23 (final)	63%	77%	-15 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	65%	80%	-14 pp
2024/25 (final)	56%	81%	-25 pp
2023/24 (final)	67%	79%	-13 pp
2022/23 (final)	75%	79%	-4 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	4.1%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.4%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	4.1%	5.9%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	7.3%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	8.8%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	6.6%	16.2%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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