School Inspection Report

Brackenmoor School

Inspection dates: 10 to 12 February 2026

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS **OUTSTANDING**

Summary of judgements

Area	Judgement
Leadership and management, including governance	Outstanding
Quality of education, training and recreation	Outstanding
Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing	Outstanding
Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society	Outstanding
Safeguarding	Outstanding
Boarding	Outstanding

School details

School	Brackenmoor School
Address	Ridgeway Lane, LittleAshdene, Hertfordshire
Type of school	Independent co-educational day school with flexi and weekly boarding
Age range	2 to 18
Number of pupils	1,042
Number of boarders	71
Head	Mr James Whitcombe
Chair of Governors	Mrs Alison Marchetti
Previous inspection	November 2022 (Outstanding)

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Summary of key findings

- Leaders and governors have a clear and ambitious vision, rooted in the school's aim that every pupil leaves known, stretched and kind. This vision shapes decisions at every level.
- Pupils make excellent progress from the Nursery to the Sixth Form. Results at GCSE and A level are consistently high, and leavers progress to a wide range of competitive universities.
- Teaching is expert and well planned. Teachers know their pupils very well and adapt lessons skilfully so that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are challenged and supported.
- Pastoral care is a significant strength. Pupils say they always have an adult to turn to, and the tutor system ensures concerns are identified and acted on quickly.
- The co-curricular programme, including the Forest School, music, drama and sport, is exceptionally broad. Participation is very high across all age groups.
- Boarding provides a warm, homely environment. Boarders value the flexibility of the arrangements and speak highly of the boarding staff.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are well trained and there is a strong culture of vigilance throughout the school.

Recommendation

The school should continue to develop its plans for pupils to take a greater role in leading the school's community service programme, building on the strong foundations already in place.

Leadership and management, including governance

The Head and senior leadership team provide calm, purposeful leadership. Self-evaluation is accurate and leads to well targeted improvement planning. Since the previous inspection, leaders have strengthened the transition between Prep and Senior School and extended the Sixth Form curriculum.

Governors bring a wide range of expertise and hold leaders to account effectively. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and the priorities for development, and they fulfil their statutory duties diligently.

Quality of education, training and recreation

The curriculum is broad, ambitious and carefully sequenced. In the Nursery and Pre Prep, children learn through play, stories and outdoor exploration, and they develop early reading and number skills rapidly. In the Prep, specialist teaching in subjects such as science, languages, music and sport deepens pupils' knowledge.

In the Senior School and Sixth Form, pupils study a wide choice of GCSE and A level courses in small groups. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and use questioning very effectively to extend pupils' thinking. Pupils' work is of a consistently high standard.

Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

Pupils are happy, confident and articulate. They understand how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy, and they make full use of the 74 acre grounds. The wellbeing programme is well led and responsive to pupils' needs.

Behaviour in lessons and around the site is exemplary. Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and staff, are characterised by mutual respect and kindness.

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Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

Pupils develop a strong sense of responsibility towards others. They take part enthusiastically in volunteering, charity work and community projects. Older pupils act as positive role models for younger pupils through mentoring and leadership roles.

Careers education is well planned. Sixth Form pupils receive personalised guidance on university applications, apprenticeships and other next steps.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding arrangements are effective and meet all requirements. Leaders ensure that staff receive regular, high quality training. Concerns are recorded and followed up promptly, and the school works well with external agencies.

Recruitment checks are thorough and accurately recorded.

Boarding

Boarding is well organised and led with care. Boarders enjoy a varied evening and weekend programme, and the boarding house is comfortable and well maintained. Boarders say they feel safe and well looked after.

Inspection team

Name	Role
Mrs Gillian Harwood	Reporting inspector (sample)
Mr Peter Lindqvist	Team inspector (sample)
Dr Amira Shah	Team inspector (sample)
Mrs Jane Thornbury	Team inspector for boarding (sample)

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