

Brunswick House Primary School



Headteacher Wendy Skinner



Highly-skilled teachers provide the children with a variety of exciting opportunities

REPORT CARD BRUNSWICK HOUSE PRIMARY SCHOOL

- » Headteacher: Wendy Skinner
- » Founded in 1949
- » Located in Maidstone, Kent
- » Type of school: Primary
- » No. of students: 420
- » The school was resited in 2002 on Leafy Lane in a modern two-form entry building
- » www.brunswick-house.kent.sch.uk

Between 2012 and 2016, Maidstone-based Brunswick House Primary School focused heavily on teaching and learning. They received recognition for this from Ofsted in 2016 as well as for their positive attitude towards pedagogy, something that was reflected in their successful SATs and phonics outcomes. However, more work was needed to strengthen the leadership team, including governance, so that the school could clearly demonstrate the work that it was doing to move the school from strength to strength. Headteacher Wendy Skinner says more about this journey and the school's commitment to best practice.

Our history and background story

The school moved to a two-deputy structure in 2017 and established designated champions within the leadership team for pupil outcomes, inclusion, safeguarding and the curriculum. Governors created an in-depth skills matrix, enabling them to easily identify the areas to recruit in. This robust recruitment strengthened the skill set of the governors further and enabled them to track and support school development with confidence.

Something that has never been in doubt, from one Ofsted inspection to the next, is our passionate commitment to providing the very best we can for every learner. Our vision of "Enjoying the Journey to Success" forms the foundation of everything we do. We inspire our pupils to achieve this with a high-quality and challenging curriculum in a child-centred and stimulating learning environment that our pupils have proudly developed alongside us.

Building a school on a set of clearly identifiable and shared values is crucial. Our values of respect, teamwork, empathy, honesty and self-belief were inspired by the 2012 Olympics, and they lie at the very heart of our ethos. Everyone is actively encouraged to demonstrate the school's values in all that they do, and we celebrate achievements linked to these and encourage our families to be a part of this.

Our belief is that every child will succeed at our school, irrespective of their starting point. Everyone is good at something – you just have to find it and make the journey towards realising it exciting and inspirational. That means that pupils must be at the centre of all of our decisions, including the ones that shape their curriculum and improve their school.

Pupil Voice

Pupil Voice is a driving force at our school, and our pupils help to lead the school in many ways. We have created a myriad of opportunities for our children to be ambassadors within our school, and they take part in democratic elections to earn their posts. From peer mediators to house captains, and from sports ambassadors to senior pupil leadership team members, our students relish the opportunity to take on key roles to improve opportunities and drive up standards for their peers across the school and in their link school in Malawi.

This has led to great success, including national awards in sport, the arts, online safety and music, as well as "Silver: Rights Aware" accreditation from Unicef as part of its highly coveted Rights Respecting Schools Award. Our children have also been key drivers in the creation of our year 1 outside-classroom, forest-school area and, after many months of campaigning, a zebra crossing, with which they have actually made their community a safer place.

Once pupils can see the part they play in their school, their sense of ownership is heightened. They want great things for their school, because they see them happening, and they want an inspiring curriculum that brings them into school every morning full of hope and anticipation. Ofsted reported: "Pupils are confident, articulate and well-prepared both for the next steps in their education and life beyond."

We encourage our children to be critical thinkers, risk-takers and growth-mindset enthusiasts. Our children are partners in their learning journey and owners of the enrichment opportunities that augment this. They are exposed to a range of opportunities that stimulate their interests. These are complemented by our wonderful school grounds, including an eco-greenhouse that the children built in collaboration with trainee architects from the University of Kent.

A curriculum that enriches the whole person

The breadth and complexity of our curriculum is crucial – it must prepare our children for their futures; it has to excite and enthuse them about learning for years to come. It must also provide them with skills and knowledge that will help them to do jobs that may not yet have been invented.

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Pupils enjoying the outdoor environment

“Every day is a learning day at Brunswick House’ is a catchphrase that has caught on with all learners”

We want our children to investigate like scientists, research like historians and explore like archaeologists – and to do that, our curriculum must create these opportunities. You simply cannot leave a stone unturned in these seven special and important years of children’s lives. Their future decisions and paths depend on it.

Bringing everyone on board

We admit families, not just children. Parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles are all invited to be a part of their child’s education, from helping on school trips to assisting in forest school sessions, cooking, and hearing children read. A strong partnership with the families that we serve is vital for each child’s success, and we invest heavily in the connections we make before a child starts school by having a comprehensive series of visits and information sessions.

Staff and children are fiercely proud of the school. Our school questionnaires regularly demonstrate this. Attendance is above the national average. Staff say they are proud to work here (100 per cent in the 2017/18 questionnaire). Our children want to come to school, and 97.8 per cent of their parents agree that they “enjoy school” (2018/19 parent questionnaire: 176 responses).

Our skilled team of governors know us well. They challenge staff and pupils to reflect and build on their strengths, while working alongside us to plan for the future and improve our children’s life chances further.

Ofsted said in 2018 that we are “a harmonious and unified community”.

The all-important high-quality teaching and learning

The most important thing is to have a good teacher in every classroom – this is non-negotiable. Over the last six years, we have worked hard to train and retain high-quality teachers and support staff through rigorous CPD, as well as coaching and mentoring support. Staff are key drivers of their own learning journey. This ensures they remain invested in being part of the school team.

Sharing inspirational practice enables our staff to improve their teaching at Brunswick House. They take part every year in the lesson study approach and video their teaching as part of our in-house Higher-Level Teaching Programme. Ideas and strategies are then shared with all staff to strengthen teaching further. Everyone has something to bring to the table.

Our attitude towards work-life balance is simple: we believe that not a moment should be wasted. Time is of the essence. Meetings are focused and are working or training sessions; no one leaves a session with more to do. Time is given back where staff devote additional time to the children, either through after-school clubs or residentials. A headteacher is only as good as the staff who work alongside her – so valuing the team is crucial. This commitment to ensuring everyone is valued is a foundation of our success, now and into the future.