



Brine Leas School

An Academy

A Specialist College of Technology and Languages

A User Guide for Staff

2017



Part of Brine MAT



September 2017

Dear Colleagues,

I seem to have been here forever but in fact came in 1994 as a youthful Head of Humanities. I became Headteacher in 2007. One size of trouser up since then and a lot less hair, but I am still here. As such one danger for me is that I can no longer spot the reasons to celebrate and the issues to be concerned about. I encourage an openness with staff and would hope that this will remain a feature of the school. Having said that there are of course occasions when all goes silent around me as I flop down next to someone in the staffroom. The aim of the booklet is to put the school into context and quickly understand what we are collectively trying to do.

Brine Leas is an above average sized School with about 1370 students and with approximately 178 staff. In a large school it is often difficult for individual members of staff to know all that is going on or even, at times, what their colleagues are doing during the day. Pressure of work, plus the inevitable problems of communication, means that all too often staff become focused on their own routine and so never get the chance to see the whole picture. Do please talk to colleagues in the staffroom - you'll be amazed what they know! However those who know most about a school are its students for they see most of the staff at work, experience all the school has to offer and are at the receiving end of all the decisions and ideas we put into practice. This is why the emphasis of OFSTED is to simply ask children more and more questions.

This booklet (now in its 23rd edition) is designed to fill in some of the missing picture. It forms part of our continuing response to Investors in People. This has focused attention upon the need to keep everyone informed about the school's aims, targets and problems.

At the moment we are doing very well. Brine Leas is a good school with outstanding features and an outstanding sixth form (Ofsted 2017). A whole hatful of other logos can be added to this which shows that every facet of the school is in excellent health. (Sainsburys Sports Gold, Artsmark Gold (2012), IIP (2011), Dyslexia friendly school). The school remains oversubscribed with very few students going to other schools from our own catchment. Examination success in 2017 built upon previous good results. Headlines should settle at 70% plus for 5 A*-C inc English and Maths. This makes us very competitive with any school across Cheshire East. Our Progress 8 last year was -0.06 and our Attainment 8 is 50. Much of the reason for this is that, as a staff collectively, we support each other and work hard. All staff need to know what systems exist and how they should be used. I do not really want staff making it up as they go along as that is when problems start to happen. For this reason do look at the staff handbook.

Staff turnover is about right and all posts are filled with applications being well above average. The school has two Specialisms, Technology (1999) and Modern Languages (2007). This did impact on everything that we did. However, although the funding stopped a few years ago, we still have significant numbers who study languages and/or a technology subject. In terms of funding all financial benchmarking is showing excellent Value for Money. Academy status has improved our financial position. The building stock is mixed but well maintained and considerable investment in IT has taken place over the last few years. A lot of the school has been refurbished with the latest being the food rooms and all maths rooms.

The curriculum is varied with various pathways allowing students a large choice. The House System provides a framework for everything that we do with student participation rates being high.

A' level results confirm that we are doing very well with A*-B in 2017 coming in at 51%, however, we would like to get this higher.

Numbers in the Sixth Form are very healthy, with Year 12 and 13 being almost full, and we are attracting significant numbers from other schools.

The catchment area is large with much of it covered in grass and cows. There are 8 Partner primary schools with 4 of them being entirely rural, Wrenbury, Audlem, Bridgemere, and Sound with Stapeley Broad Lane being on the outskirts of Nantwich. The remaining three are on the more urban side: Nantwich Primary Academy (shared catchment with Malbank), Pear Tree and Weaver.

Our latest SES will affect all teaching staff and our whole school development plan reflects these changes. We want lessons to be challenging and to re-invigorate the House system.

We are doing rather well at the moment but of course the very time that we become complacent then we will slip. Those expectations should be from everyone; be it the support required for an NQT or the direction needed to settle into a new role.

We are currently a single Academy in the Brine MAT. Apparently, I am the CEO! Other school should join over the next 12 months and I won't then be so executively lonely.

The school's Mission Statement is to "Believe, Learn, Succeed". It is the staff who are at the heart of a good school and for us the next few years will be challenging and exciting. Sharing our work will help us all achieve the demanding targets we have set and ensure we gain professional satisfaction and fulfilment. We are working with other schools this year and this role needs to be continued in order to fit in with our specialist college status.

For every child in a school there should be at least one adult who is trusted. Of course this adult can play any part in the running of Brine Leas; equally in the staffroom there should be somebody for every eventuality. That somebody could be your line manager, a colleague or a buddy. Ultimately all systems, and indeed all of our energy, should be centred on the students. Push this further and it is about what impact you have on our stakeholders. Whatever your role in the school is, if we forget about the importance of students and their families then we will not continue to achieve as well as we should.

Read the booklet carefully and if in doubt ask.

I hope you enjoy reading my ramblings; remember, the strength of a good school is found in its staff. Sharing what we do makes us a stronger team and in this way we make the school more effective and our own jobs more worthwhile. Brine Leas' staff are its greatest representatives and ambassadors in the local community. Go outside your area, do get involved in extra-curricular activities and enjoy being with young people.



Andrew Cliffe
Headteacher

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT BRINE LEAS SCHOOL

Number of rooms:-

Main School

A Block - 21 teaching rooms plus library

B Block - 22 teaching rooms

C Block - 5 Technology rooms and the Main Hall

D Block - 8 classroom block

E Block - Sports Hall, Gym and 2 classrooms (mobiles)

BL6

In BL6 there are 10 Seminar rooms, a Lecture room, Media Suite, Music Studio, Art & Graphics Studio, Language Suite, 3 Science rooms, 3 Technology rooms, 4 Business & ICT rooms and a Fitness Suite

Number of teachers: 102 (inc Peripatetic Music Teachers)

Support staff: 76

Budget for 2017/18: £6.7 million (inc post-16 funding, exc school generated income)

Playing Fields:

- 3 Rugby
- 3 Football (some are dual use)
- 1 cricket square with 1 new artificial wicket
- Grass running track
- Sports Hall & Gymnasium
- Floodlit tennis courts/netball etc
- Centre of Excellence for Cricket (Sports Council funded)

Number of Students: 1370 approx

Specialist Facilities:

- Music Centre & refurbished Drama Studio
- 7 Science Laboratories (refurbished with more to follow)
- Mathematics Workshop
- 7 ICT Centres
- Re-furbished Technology Area
- Library
- Art & Ceramics Centre
- MFL Lab

Meals served each day: 700 plus

Number of 11-16 Children from out-of-catchment: Around 25%

RECENT NATIONAL AWARDS

2017 Ofsted: Overall 'Good' with BL6 'Outstanding'
Investor in People
IIP – Leadership & Management IIP – Work-Life Balance
Sainsburys Sports Gold
Arts Mark Gold (5th consecutive time)
Schools Curriculum Award
“Giving Nation Award” (1st national winners)
Dyslexic Friendly school
High Performing Specialist School
ECO Silver Award
REQM 2016
Chartered Institute for IT Approved Centre

WHAT IS BRINE LEAS SCHOOL?

I remember a Cointreau advert that started off like this ‘..... a subtle blend of herbs and spices etc’. The buildings date from the late 1950s with major additions from the mid-1970s onwards and are not subtle! It has a large sports hall and many specialist facilities for all the main subjects. Particular attention has been given to developing and improving facilities to resource a technological curriculum for the 21st century. In 1999, the school benefited from major capital investment through its Technology College Status and the construction of a new Arts & Ceramics Centre. For those of us who have been here a long time it is sometimes difficult remembering how run down the school had become. The technology workshops were upgraded, a new food centre constructed, new laboratory and maths rooms installed with substantial upgrading to the school’s ICT facilities. Since then virtually all teaching areas have been re-furbished and upgraded with MFL being suited for the first time. Most public areas have been repainted and all the main corridors have had new flooring. This is not just cosmetic – our purpose is to create a working environment for staff and students that is pleasant and enjoyable. In 2006-7 the Sports Hall was extended, re-furbished and upgraded. This was funded through funds from the school (PSCA & Patrons’), the LA and Nantwich Town Council. In addition a new science preparation room was constructed in summer 2006. In the last 18 months two laboratories have been totally refurbished and new toilets opened.

BL6 opened in September 2010.

The school grounds have been transformed with new yards and we have added to the leisure facilities for students. The bike sheds have been improved, with additional provision put in place.

WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO DO?

The school’s mission statement is simple:-

“Believe, Learn Succeed”

In 2017-18, challenge in lessons is our main focus and T&L changes to support this.

Long term we may consider an extra form of entry. We took an additional form of entry in 2015-16 only, and at some stage they will need extra rooms.

WORKING HERE

- You will be challenged and supported.
- There is a lively staff social life.
- Your professional development will be encouraged.
- Many staff who have children send them to BLS (it is an over-subscription criteria in our Admissions Policy).

BEING A SPECIALIST COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY

Brine Leas School believes that learning, work and the pursuit of leisure and personal happiness in the 21st Century will be achieved in a technological world of ever increasing complexity and diversity. It is no longer funded separately but it is still important.

This will be achieved by:-

- Developing the use of technology for teaching & learning in all areas of the curriculum to enrich students' experience.
- Developing computer based learning and access to knowledge through Information and Communication Technology.
- Ensuring all students have access to high quality learning experiences in Science, Technology and Mathematics.
- Setting high attainment targets to encourage expertise and personal success
- Expanding and improving the school's resources and facilities to provide appropriate specialist-teaching units.
- Training and developing staff skills to provide expertise for the school and community
- Creating a virtual learning environment based upon Homework-on-line

Our Technology College status has been the springboard for whole school development that has focused upon developing teaching & learning across all areas of the curriculum. It has highlighted the critical importance of relationships between staff and students, and between students themselves.

BEING A SPECIALIST LANGUAGE COLLEGE

From 1st April 2006 Brine Leas became a Specialist Language College, one of a very small number of schools that have two specialisms. This is a marvellous opportunity for our students and the local community. Despite Brexit and possibly to spite Brexit, I believe that Britain is part of a European community that has to prosper in a global economy.

Our students need to be familiar and confident in another European language because it is part of our shared heritage and because our economic survival depends upon it. Locally the role played by Volkswagen (Bentley Motors) makes this need very clear indeed.

All students already take at least one Foreign Language, many take two. Most study a language at KS4. We offer three foreign exchange opportunities.

THE SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Each year the school produces the School Development Plan which contains the school's aims & targets for the coming year and longer-term ideas for the next few years. This Plan is constructed by the Governors and Senior Staff, it is based upon:

- the ideas and targets that are put forward by staff

- the targets that emerge from the school's self-evaluation process
- national and local targets

In this way the school's overall targets have a very real foundation in the professional skills and experience of the school's staff and perceptions of Governors. The staff conferences and discussions, held in September each year, form an important part in our self-evaluation and inform our SDP. To further inform this work we consult with students, parents and the wider community upon the next stage of our development through forum meetings, questionnaires and the growing use of the school website as the standard access point for many families. The SEF (now renamed SES) is a real and never completed document. Departments feed into it and out of it comes the whole school development plan.

You should be a part of this process whatever your role in school is.

HOW DO WE TURN THESE AIMS INTO REALITY?

The school believes that all children should taste success at their own level. Therefore all children must be encouraged to work to their best. To help students we set clear standards for classroom work and encourage all children to aim high.

- My Child at School provides easy access for families (students/parents/carers). MCAS is a relatively new process which our ICT team continually work on improvements to produce a more effective and efficient system for our students.
- *Targets* are shared openly with all students. These are constantly refined and provide a key role in all the tracking, monitoring and intervention that we do. We have moved to 3 data collection points.
- The VLE is increasingly a go to tool for parents and students to access teacher comments/attendance and homework.
- *The School Examination Policy* provides all children with an opportunity to enter for examinations in which they stand a reasonable chance of achieving their best. We encourage and reward excellence at an individual level and specialisation is welcomed when it forms part of a broad and balanced curriculum. In 2017-18 the curriculum at Key Stage 4 offers courses that provide students with a real choice.

ENSURING EXCELLENCE

We still employ a School Improvement Partner (SIP) who helps to give challenge and support to the school. In addition, we purchase external experts to independently review departments on a rolling programme.

THE FUTURE

Change is vital in education for it creates the opportunity for improvement and development for the whole school, as well as for individual staff. We believe the main changes over the next few years will be in the following areas.

1. The curriculum will develop to meet the demands of a technological society with all students gaining Information Technology skills. We shall continue to pursue all the options open to improving the school including bidding opportunities. This policy is based upon our belief that students work best when their learning is individual to them. The challenge will be keeping our nerve in believing that our curriculum should suit our children.

2. We shall continue to spread news of the school's success in order to maintain our current intake levels. We believe that a full school is a busy school and we shall continue to rely upon parents and staff to give their support. In particular, we will support the work of the PSCA.
3. Brine Leas is committed to developing Life Long Learning within the local community.
4. Having gained sporting awards and Arts Mark Gold we will maintain our commitment and expertise in the arts and sport, believing that these are essential elements in a good school.
5. We will always seek to appoint the best qualified and enthusiastic staff to posts at all levels for we recognise that it is the quality of our staff that is the school's most important asset.
6. To further improve student performance we will develop our programmes to deliver (a) student monitoring and mentoring (b) a system of individual student target setting (c) assessment. These will be linked to active staff use of data management software. We are building a coherent ARR programme linking KS2 to KS4.
7. Following the introduction of Performance Management Review, we will ensure that our internal processes of review and self-evaluation are rigorous and effective so that we are able to maintain our developments in teaching & learning.
8. The school became a New Academy in September 2010. This means we are independent from the LA's control. We believe this will help the school to develop more effective education for the local community with an opportunity to cherry pick the best parts of the national Curriculum and national developments in teaching and learning. Academy funding has opened new doors. In 2016 we became a standalone MAT.

WELLBEING

Schools are built upon good relationships. We do regular staff surveys and many staff choose to socialise together. We have a very good Occupational Health Scheme.

WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT BRINE LEAS SCHOOL?

1. Brine Leas is a very successful school. We are usually amongst the top schools in the Cheshire league tables. Our students enjoy a strong House System with a rich programme of music, sport, drama and other competitive activities.
2. We remain over-subscribed and families move into the area in order to secure a place.
3. Our intake is a mixture of children from the villages and farms of South Cheshire and the towns of Crewe and Nantwich. This combination creates a lively and interesting group of students who are treated equally and enjoy the same opportunities.
4. The school is traditional in many ways with full school uniform applying to all students throughout main school and a dress code for BL6 students. We believe it is important for children to arrive at school with the right equipment and attitude for the working day. Uniform helps this process and goes some way towards building the feeling of equality and community within the school.
5. Generally, we are well thought of by the community.

In order to develop and improve student performance, Brine Leas has developed two special and successful approaches in the daily life of the school:-

- **Positive Schooling**

This is our whole school approach to rewards, motivation and student discipline. It is based on rewarding students who do their best and who work in lessons. It discourages children who try to cause low level disruption or who do not work. As a result it is clear to all that this school values work and commitment so that all children can receive praise and rewards - regardless of their ability. Equally, those few children who disrupt the work of the school, or who cause trouble for others, (through bullying, for example) know that the school will deal with the problems they cause. The result is that children feel safer and valued.

- **The House System**

All children at Brine Leas belong to one of three Houses - **Lovell, Warwick or Audley** (these are local family names).

They remain in their House all the time they are at BLS. The Houses provide a framework for a twelve-month programme of events and competitions that involves and values as many children as possible.

This system is based on the belief that children respond and succeed best when they are involved, motivated and appreciated. When all know and share the rules of the school, then the community works together across the whole range of the school's activities. New ties were introduced for Year 7's in 2012 which emphasize House colours.

Progress Managers for each Year Group provide support to students.

EXAMINATION SUCCESS

Brine Leas students consistently achieve high standards in GCSE examinations. They have always been above local and national averages and this school is usually one of the better performing schools in the County.

% of 15 year old Students achieving 5 A*-C				
2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
99%	95%	87%	81%	76%

% of 15 year old Students achieving 5 Standard Passes or above <i>These cannot be directly compared to results pre-2017</i>				
2017				
75%				

% of 15 year old Students achieving 5 A*-C (inc. Eng and Maths)				
2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
72%	69%	71%	74%	69%

% of 15 year old Students achieving 5 Standard Passes or above (inc Eng and Maths) <i>These cannot be directly compared to results pre-2017</i>				
2017				
75%				

% A* and A's					
2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
33%	28%	27%	26%	25%	23.4%

MUSIC DRAMA AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR SPORT

This school has a number of bands and a choir which have a marvellous reputation in the local area. There are a large number of performances across the community.

Competitive sport is available for all students and forms a very important part of the House programme as well as a full calendar of competitions against other schools. Equally important are competitive events for Music, Drama, Public Speaking and other non-sporting activities. This year we are putting on a whole school musical production.

There is also an extensive range of extra-curricular activities including a residential course for all Year 7 students, Curriculum Enrichment Week and exchange visits with schools in France, Germany and Spain.

HOW DOES THE SCHOOL OPERATE?

1. Teaching staff are organised through their subject departments. These are grouped into **9 Curriculum Areas**; Humanities, Social Science, Mathematics, Science, Modern Foreign Languages, English, Technology, BITE and Creative Arts with Leisure (iCreate).
2. The school is operating in 2017-18 with one Deputy Head, five Assistant Headteachers and a Head of Sixth Form. Together with the Headteacher and Business Manager, they form the Leadership Group and work with the senior staff to organise the teaching and learning programmes, plus the whole range of activities that keep the school functioning from day to day. We also currently have one associate member of the Leadership Team.
3. The school has almost as many support staff as teachers. We depend as much on their work as the classroom teachers. Though this may be obvious for some of the senior roles, it is equally true for cleaning, caretaking and other “support” tasks, for everybody relies on these essential jobs to keep the school working and make the day worthwhile and pleasant.
4. The school places particular emphasis on providing a high quality education. This involves, not just excellent teaching, but developing and improving all other aspects of our work. This is why we have supported the development of the school meals service (we have taken on a new franchise for school meals), re-decorated and upgraded many classrooms, re-surfaced playgrounds and invested in extensive repairs and maintenance.
6. The school has an active and effective PSCA, which meets regularly to plan a series of popular and well-supported events. Each year the PSCA raises substantial amounts of money for the school to purchase equipment and teaching materials.

6. The school has a Local Governing Board of 11 local people composed of elected parents, teachers and appointed members of the local business and commercial community. Mrs Su Turner is Chair of the Governing Body. The Governors are increasingly active with link activities.

TIMETABLE AND CURRICULUM

This school has a two-week (ten-day) timetable with 50 one-hour teaching periods. All children follow the same curriculum but they are usually grouped into different sets depending upon their ability and attainment.

All students study English, Mathematics, Science, Modern Languages, ICT, RE, PE, Citizenship, Sex and Relationships Education and Careers.

In addition to this, at KS3, all students also study Technology, Art, Music, Drama, History and Geography whereas at KS4, students choose optional examination subjects from Art, Ceramics, Drama, Sport, Textiles, Graphic Products, Resistant Materials, Geography, History, a second Modern Language, Computing, Business Studies, Travel & Tourism, Engineering, Construction, Electronic Products, Catering, Dance, Product Design, ASDAN and Media Studies.

Able students are encouraged to specialise in three sciences and/or take two foreign languages.

ABLE AND TALENTED STUDENTS

Excellence and aptitude are valued across the range of the school's work. All subjects provide a range of formal courses that offer outstanding students the opportunity to excel. Often this extension work is through the school's extensive enrichment programme, particularly in Sport and the Arts. The school organises residential learning programmes and supports students attending national "Gifted & Talented" courses.

RECRUITMENT AND PRIMARY LIAISON

BLS has 8 feeder schools, but it usually admits students from between 20 to 30 different schools. We visit new students in their own schools in the Summer Term and hold presentations in the early autumn term, to meet and talk to prospective parents. We hold an Open Day and an Activity Day for pupils in Years 5 & 6 in October. This year 224 new students joined us.

Contact with our primary schools is maintained throughout the year and in the summer term an Intake Day and evening is held for the new admissions and their parents.

WHERE DO OUR STUDENTS GO AFTER YEAR 11?

Locally there is the largest educational change. Virtually all of our students go into some form of continuing education and our NEET figure is well below the national average. The majority proceed to study A Levels at BLS, but a number also go to further education courses Reaseheath College. The success rate at A' level is very high and matches the student's performance at GCSE. Our students are amongst the best qualified both nationally and locally, with considerable numbers entering Higher Education. From 2010, students had the option to stay on at Brine Leas at Post-16.

WHAT DOES IT ALL COST?

Our budget is around £6.7m not including capital investment. The majority of this goes on staffing, but substantial sums are spent on running and maintaining the school. Each year part of the budget goes into classroom spending (capitation). In the past we have had next to no contingency. In 2008 we had less than £5000 left at the end of the year, in 2009 we had even less but in 2010 there was two shillings and a half penny. However, with Academy status, we have already managed to build up a reasonable contingency fund. Funding has increased and we have been particularly successful with capital bids. From now on though, we are eating into reserves and, like everyone else, will have to make some savings. We have been there before so we will be alright. We envisage two very difficult years. Hopefully changes to the National Funding Formula (announced in July 2017 will help us).

FUTURE CURRICULM

The content and style of our teaching and learning programme changes as a result of review and evaluation.

We have developed our Virtual Learning Environment, particularly homework on-line, and this is being extended to provide parental access to the schools learning materials and performance data.

AND FINALLY

I hope that you have found this booklet useful. To me the school is a very special place and it is bigger than any one individual. This is a place where mistakes can be made, but put right, and where staff and students can develop their full potential. The job is never finished be we're doing our best. If nothing else, we all need to remember that we are only here to do the very best that we can for the children with whom we are entrusted. If what we do does not make things better for our children then we should not be doing it.