

Brixham College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113527
Local Authority	Torbay
Inspection number	378725
Inspection dates	13–14 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Karl Sampson HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,010
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mike Morey
Principal	Mr Mark Eager
Date of previous school inspection	19–20 November 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors carried out observations of 34 part-lessons taught by 32 teachers and saw parts of tutor time as well as a house assembly. Ten of the lessons were jointly observed by members of the college's leadership team. One inspector undertook a learning walk which was comprised of a number of short visits to lessons to look at provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, staff, three members of the governing body and different groups of students. Inspectors observed the college's work and looked at the college's self-evaluation and planning documents, external evaluations of the college's work, policy documents and students' work. They analysed 120 questionnaires sent in by parents and carers, questionnaires completed by a sample of students from each year group and 40 completed by staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the college's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well all students are achieving, particularly in English and mathematics.
- The extent to which teaching provides both support and challenge for all groups of students.
- The contribution to college improvement made by partnerships and the arts specialism.
- The accuracy and demonstrable impact of self-evaluation by leaders and managers at all levels in driving up outcomes for all groups of learners.

Information about the school

Brixham College is larger than most secondary schools. It is a non-selective secondary school set in an area where selective grammar school education is available. Most students are of White British heritage and the vast majority speak English as their first language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly below the national average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to national; their needs include moderate learning difficulties and there are also students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs is more than double that found nationally. The college offers specialist resourced provision for students with autism; places are currently occupied by 16 students. The college has a specialism in visual arts and is designated as a Healthy School. It currently holds the Investors in People, Education Business Excellence and International School awards.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Brixham College is a good and improving school. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching, a curriculum that offers an increasing level of personalisation and well-targeted academic and pastoral support. It is led well by a principal who has a commitment and passion to raise the aspirations of all students and achieve the highest quality outcomes for them. In the two years since his appointment, the principal has had to deal with some tough issues, including a reduction in staffing and large scale restructuring of senior and middle leadership responsibilities. However, with the full support of governors, senior colleagues and the college community these issues have been tackled with resolute determination and considerable success. Although some initiatives are still relatively new, others are firmly embedded in practice, most importantly the systems for tracking the progress of different groups of students and devising effective programmes of intervention to address any potential underachievement. As a result, the actions taken have had considerable impact in raising attainment, improving behaviour and developing the quality of teaching. Leadership and management are good in the resource base, as in the main school. Self-evaluation is effective and the college's capacity to sustain its overall improvement is good.

The college provides an outstanding level of care, advice and guidance for groups of students and for individuals by working closely with a range of outside agencies and education and business partners. It has successfully developed a flexible and responsive structure to provide for the wide range of students' needs. Consequently, most students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities in the main school, as well as those students in the college's specialist autism resource base, now make good progress academically and in their personal development.

The quality of learning in classrooms across the college is improving because expectations of students' capabilities have been raised through more stringent use of assessment data to set challenging targets and inform teachers' planning. There is some outstanding teaching, which engages students through high-quality dialogue that helps to foster a deeper understanding and extends thinking. Some teachers are very skilful in tailoring activities that stretch and challenge all learners regardless of their starting point so that their progress is consistently good or better. They know exactly where students are in their learning, understand when they are ready to take the next steps and convey clearly how this can best be achieved. However, this strong practice is not sufficiently consistent and quality overall not sufficiently high to move good teaching and learning towards outstanding.

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Students say they feel very safe and the outstanding systems to support their welfare have an extremely positive effect on their personal development. They are confident that bullying is dealt with effectively and they know whom they would go to if they needed help or support. Students make an extensive contribution to the life of the college and the wider community thanks to the curriculum, the outstanding range of partnerships and the excellent opportunities arising from the college's specialist status. Behaviour has improved and is good around the college and in most lessons. There is a palpable sense of pride among those who work and learn here. Students are quick to highlight and praise the improvements that have taken place in the last two years and say that they enjoy their time at the college. These views are supported by the improvement in attendance and the significant reduction in the number of fixed-term exclusions.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to raise attainment by improving teaching in all subjects by:
 - moving more of the good teaching to outstanding and eradicating the small amount of weaker teaching
 - ensuring that the quality of all lessons matches the best in the college through effective dissemination of exemplary teaching to help others to understand how to improve their own practice
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment information consistently well when planning lessons so that work is closely aligned to students' individual needs, provides high levels of challenge and secures consistently good or better progress
 - extending the use of probing questions and high quality dialogue to stimulate more active participation from students in all lessons and a greater capacity for their ideas and contributions to drive the learning forward.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

In the majority of lessons observed, students make good progress. They generally apply skills well to a range of activities. This is most evident when learning is purposeful and well paced and enhanced by a good range of challenging learning activities. Crucially, learning is strongest where teachers use their acute knowledge of students' individual strengths and weaknesses to deftly target provision to meet individual needs and maximise progress. However, college leaders know that sometimes learning activities are not sufficiently fine tuned in lessons to ensure that progress is consistently good or better for all groups of students.

Historically, attainment has been low, reflecting low attainment on entry to the college. However, over the last two years in particular the college has been effective in the action it has taken to raise achievement, including in English and mathematics. Improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, changes to the leadership and

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management structure and a more focused approach to intervention have enabled students to close the gap towards what is attained nationally. Consequently, GCSE examination results have improved and attainment is now broadly average and rising. The college’s data and standards seen in lessons and students’ books show that this improving trend is set to continue. The college’s monitoring of progress and attainment for different groups is efficient and detailed, leading to more appropriately tailored support for students. In the past the achievement of the small numbers of students known to be eligible for free school meals has been lower than their peers. An analysis of college data for the current cohort and progress seen in lessons show that the impact of this work is already beginning to accelerate the progress made by this group.

Students behave well in lessons and around the college. Where teaching was good, students’ behaviour made a stronger contribution to learning. In the most engaging lessons, behaviour was outstanding. The college is doing all it can to raise students’ aspirations and, last year, the number of students who left school and who were not in further education, employment or training was below the national average. The arts specialism and excellent range of education and business partnerships support students to gain the necessary skills they need to take the next steps in their lives with confidence. Opportunities for students to contribute to the college and wider community are extensive and diverse, and participation rates are high for all groups. Students say how much they value their college and local community and demonstrate good engagement in a variety of ways; for example, through their heritage work with the local fishing community, performing arts productions, sports leadership and charitable work. The student management committee is becoming increasingly influential in supporting college evaluation and development.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

2

How effective is the provision?

The way in which the college cares for and supports students is outstanding. The college makes effective use of its excellent 'student support system' to target help for individuals and groups of potentially vulnerable learners, including those who display challenging behaviour. Inspectors observed numerous examples of how the college has linked with other agencies and families to improve the life chances of students in difficult circumstances. Transition arrangements into Year 7 as well as support for options choices and post-16 careers guidance are strengths of the college's provision and highly valued by parents, carers and students. Individual support and provision for students in the main school with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the autistic students from the college's resource base are strong, thanks to the range and quality of personalised programmes available. For example, the 'Ed Lounge' system supports students with complex medical or behavioural needs and enables them to catch up with missed work remotely from home. Students who spoke with inspectors value the additional support sessions for examination groups; these have contributed to the positive picture of examination performance.

The curriculum is developing well and provides an appropriate level of flexibility and a wide array of support and options to meet the needs of individuals. Although not yet fully embedded there are a number of emerging strengths in the college's own programme to support the development of learning skills across the curriculum. At Key Stage 4, specialist status and the school's partnership work with other local providers has improved the richness of academic, vocational and applied learning opportunities available. This has enabled students to select a combination of courses that meets their needs much more closely. Careful monitoring of choice and effectiveness of courses result in improved achievement. For example, adjustments to the entry requirements and a greater breadth of arts-based courses have led to a significant improvement in academic achievement across the specialism. The range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities on offer is extremely impressive. These opportunities are well attended by all groups of students and give good support to aspects of their personal development.

The strengths of teaching outweigh any relative weaknesses. Positive relationships and behaviour feature in most classes and help to establish an atmosphere conducive to learning. Teachers use new technologies confidently to develop understanding and enhance the quality of students' learning experience. The large majority of lessons observed were good or better. The best lessons use assessment information precisely to plan challenging lesson activities that draw students into learning and enable them to articulate ideas fluently and with confidence. These lessons ensured good opportunities for students to influence and steer learning by developing ideas of their own, acting as partners in the learning process or by learning independently of the teacher. Teachers use effective questioning to gauge students' understanding and, where necessary, re-shape explanations and offer high-

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quality verbal and written guidance about steps for improvement. As a result, students are supported to manage and develop their own learning with more confidence. However, these skills are not yet apparent in all teaching. Elsewhere good practice prevails, although inspectors observed satisfactory learning more frequently than that which was outstanding. As yet the practice that exemplifies outstanding teaching is not systematically disseminated to other staff. Senior leaders recognise the need to continue the process of strengthening teaching quality as the next significant step on the journey to excellence.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The excellent leadership of the principal has been pivotal in improving the quality of provision and outcomes. His direction and influence have had a significant impact on building the skills and confidence of all college leaders and of teachers. He is ably supported by his senior team who help to ensure that ambition is articulated through high expectations and a mission to enable every student to succeed. The restructuring of the leadership team and faculty structure has ensured greater levels of transparency and accountability across the college. College leaders at all levels have a more detailed, accurate and realistic understanding of the college’s strengths and areas for development. Consequently, college improvement planning and successful interventions to support learning are firmly based on the findings of this accurate self-evaluation. The college’s commitment to equality of opportunity is exemplified by its work to successfully raise attainment and achievement overall. Targets are now challenging and a more sophisticated tracking system is being used effectively to secure and accelerate students’ progress. Although not yet fully embedded, this information is being used to help all staff identify where to intervene to provide additional support and where new teaching strategies need to be developed to improve learning.

Governors play an effective role in the college’s development. They have realigned their committee structure so that it mirrors the college’s key priorities and play a full role in the systematic review of the college improvement plan and its ‘levers for change’. A traffic light system is used well to evaluate and ensure that progress is maintained and value for money achieved. Safeguarding arrangements are good. The college takes the protection of its students very seriously; effective procedures and well-established training are in place to keep students safe. The college’s contribution to community cohesion is good. Its strengths are in the well-established

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international links and strong partnerships with primary and further education providers to engage with and support the needs of its immediate community. The way that the college has used the creative media aspect of its visual arts specialism to work in tandem with the local fishing community to help to preserve its heritage is a great example of the college’s excellent partnership work.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

A lower-than-average percentage of parents and carers responded to the Ofsted questionnaire. The very large majority were overwhelmingly positive about almost all aspects of the school’s work. A very small minority of parents and carers who responded raised concerns about behaviour and the consistency with which it is dealt with in some lessons. The inspection team judged that behaviour was good in and around the school during this inspection and over time, thanks to the whole-college focus on improving behaviour to support more effective learning. Consequently, the quality of provision has improved and is now underpinned by effective procedures to support further development. Most parents and carers who responded are happy with their child’s experience and enjoyment at the college and believe that it is led and managed very effectively.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Brixham College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 120 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,010 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	48	40	61	51	9	8	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	47	39	66	55	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	50	42	52	43	7	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	47	39	58	48	4	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	34	28	74	62	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	35	29	62	52	10	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	27	72	60	7	6	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	45	38	58	48	5	4	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	40	33	60	50	6	5	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	25	61	51	13	11	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	24	67	56	4	3	4	3
The school is led and managed effectively	40	33	62	52	6	5	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	56	47	53	44	6	5	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



15 September 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Brixham College, Brixham TQ5 9HF

Thank you for your help and for taking the time to talk to us during the recent inspection. I am writing to tell you about our findings. We judged the college to be good. It has worked really hard since the last inspection to improve your achievement. Your principal leads the college very well, and is ably supported by other staff and the governors. They are all determined that you should have the opportunity to succeed and their work enables you to achieve good outcomes. You told us how much you appreciate the work of your teachers.

You enjoy coming to school, are extremely well cared for, have a good range of curricular opportunities and examination support and are well taught. You particularly appreciate the good range of curricular options and their impact on your achievement and in helping you to prepare successfully for life beyond school. You told us you feel safe, and we think your behaviour in and around the college is good. You are able to make an excellent contribution to the life of the college and the wider community, thanks to the strong partnerships that the college has developed, particularly at a local and global level.

College leaders and staff are committed to continuing its improvement and are all ambitious to make it even better in the future. We have asked Mr Eager and his team to continue raising attainment across the curriculum and concentrate in particular on:

- enabling teachers to share their best ideas across all subjects and learn from each other so that all teaching is consistently good or better
- ensuring all teachers provide you with challenging learning activities which engage you more actively in learning and better meet your individual learning needs
- using dialogue and questions in lessons to deepen your understanding, allowing you enough time to develop and explain your ideas and enabling you to take greater responsibility for your own learning and progress.

You can certainly help your teachers by responding to their comments and using the feedback that they give, so you improve your learning and the quality of your work.

Yours sincerely

Karl Sampson
Her Majesty's Inspector

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