

Bradon Forest School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126503
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	381244
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Michael Merchant

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,031
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alistair Haney
Headteacher	Leonard Spiers
Date of previous school inspection	5–6 November 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. Thirty-seven lessons or part lessons were observed, taught by 37 different teachers. Meetings were held with students, members of the governing body, staff the headteacher and other school leaders. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including the school's records of students' attainment and progress, school policies, including safeguarding documentation, and the school development plan. In addition, questionnaires from 339 parents and carers, 143 students and 48 staff were analysed.

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

- The effectiveness of strategies to improve students' attainment and progress, particularly in English.
- The accuracy of teachers' assessments and how effectively this information is used to plan further steps in students' learning.
- How well leaders, including the governing body, check students' attainment, progress and the quality of teaching and learning, and the effectiveness of this in contributing to the school's improvement.

Information about the school

In this average-sized comprehensive school the large majority of students are from a White British background. Most students travel to the school from rural areas surrounding Purton and from the northern and western parts of Swindon. Changes to school transport funding have led to a fall in the school roll in recent years. Both the percentage of students eligible for free school meals and the proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are below average. The school has specialist status in performing arts and it has achieved a number of awards, including Healthy Schools, Eco School, International School and Artsmark Gold and ICTmark.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Bradon Forest provides its students with a satisfactory standard of education. Parents and carers are supportive of the school and have confidence in its leadership. One wrote, 'My children have greatly enjoyed the school' and this was typical of the views of others. There are signs of secure improvement, notably in pupils' achievement, after a period, following the last inspection, when many students did not achieve as much as they could have.

Leaders embed ambition and drive improvement satisfactorily. They are ensuring that teaching staff have high expectations of their students, know what is expected of them and feel confident that they are part of a successful future for the school. An emerging strength of the school is the quality of its self-evaluation procedures, which involve parents and carers well. These procedures mean that leaders at all levels know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and have robust plans in place to address areas in need of improvement. Detailed and relevant improvement planning and rising levels of student achievement and attendance reflect a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

The attainment of students by the end of Year 11 is broadly average. However, more-able pupils continue to do relatively less well in English, mainly because writing, although improving, remains a relative weakness. Pupils' learning and progress are satisfactory. A systematic response to past underperformance is beginning to accelerate progress. Attainment is significantly above average in design and technology and vocational studies, and is above average in business studies and geography. However, attainment in many subjects, including mathematics, English language and science, is broadly average.

There has been tangible progress in improving teaching and tackling inconsistent practice across different subjects. However, there is some variation in the way that assessment information is used to challenge all pupils and in the varied pace of lessons. The best practice evident in the school is not always effectively shared. There is inconsistency in the way that marking provides students with good quality written feedback to guide them in how to improve their work and support high levels of achievement.

The good quality of care, guidance and support has a positive impact on students' attitudes and personal development. They show pride and respect and develop good social and interpersonal skills and relish working collaboratively. Students have a

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good understanding of moral issues and demonstrate strong spiritual awareness in their consideration of emotions and beliefs. Many commented on the inspirational and thought-provoking assemblies. Students make a good contribution to the local community and the school and greatly enjoy taking part in a wide variety of cultural activities. Their above-average attendance reflects their enjoyment of school. Staff know students well and support those groups whose circumstances make them more vulnerable effectively, for example those who are young carers. As a result, students enjoy school greatly. Safeguarding procedures are good and pupils feel safe.

The school provides a good curriculum. This is especially evident in its specialist area of performing arts, ensuring the school makes a good contribution to the local area. Students have a well-developed understanding of the arts and culture and of life in different areas of the world. The school's specialisms are also at the heart of its strong working ties with local primary schools that ensure good transition to secondary school, with post-16 providers supporting very high progression rates and strong links to the wider performing arts education community.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement for Year 11 students so that it is at least good by:
 - ensuring that effective techniques to teach writing are employed consistently so all pupils write confidently and creatively
 - making sure that teachers plan for and extend the learning of the more-able pupils at a consistently challenging pace throughout lessons.
- By July 2012, increase the proportion of good and better teaching in order to accelerate progress by:
 - effectively sharing good and outstanding practice
 - ensuring that leaders and managers monitor the use of assessment information by all teachers so that appropriately challenging work is set for all students
 - giving pupils more responsibility for their own learning by encouraging them to be more active and inquisitive in class.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Students start at the school with broadly average levels of attainment, although they are often lower in writing than in reading or mathematics. Attainment is improving, notably in mathematics by the end of Year 11. In 2011, the proportion of Year 11 students gaining five good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, rose

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significantly compared to the two previous years. However, results show some variability across a variety of GCSE subjects.

As a result of good support and well-targeted interventions, the progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to that of their peers, at least satisfactory and in some cases better. There is no significant difference in the rates of learning and progress of boys and girls. Most students enjoy learning and are keen to do their best.

Progress was fastest when teaching activities helped develop students’ understanding as well as focusing on subject knowledge. This was seen clearly in an outstanding Year 9 physics lesson when the students made excellent use of their secure knowledge and understanding of physics to design an investigation into the relationships of weights and distance across a fulcrum. However, this is not always the case as there are occasions when higher attainers are not consistently challenged. Attainment in English is sometimes held back because some students have difficulty in explaining their ideas when they have read a text, which in turn inhibits their ability to write well at the higher levels; this also limits their ability in mathematics to solve higher-level number problems expressed in words.

Students feel safe, saying very little bullying and few racist incidents occur. The behaviour of students in lessons and around the school is good and often impeccable, although some can be boisterous at lesson change-overs and at the end of the day. Relationships are very good. Students enjoy a wide variety of opportunities to take part in sports and they have a satisfactory understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet. The proportion of students who are not in education, employment or training after they have left school is extremely low and many individuals have high ambitions.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers often set challenging tasks involving active learning leading to high levels of student engagement and rapid progress. Students are keen to learn but there are variations in the quality of teaching and learning across the school. In some lessons, work is not matched sufficiently well to students' needs and capabilities, leading to poor motivation and progress slowing. Planning is usually thorough but does not always make effective use of the students' prior learning. There were relatively few examples of high-level independent learning seen during the inspection.

The school has set up thorough systems to check on students' progress and these are now used well to ensure that none is in danger of falling behind. However, variability in the quality of advice teachers give to students means they do not always know specifically what skills they have to master to reach their targets.

Students benefit from a curriculum that is imaginative and flexible. It meets their interests and individual needs well. Different pathways, including the more traditional academic subjects, provide students with a range of offers from which to choose. The school's performing arts specialism, as well as having a big impact on the ethos of the school, enhances the curriculum in expressive arts, drama, music, and in English. It has provided additional resources and teacher time that are helping to improve other subjects across the curriculum.

Students feel that their views are heard, valued and responded to. As one student said, 'Teachers help us. They are always there both for academic and pastoral issues. There is always a friendly face to help you.' Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable, or those at risk of exclusion, are given perceptive, tailored support that has a clearly discernible impact. Systems to promote good attendance are very successful, with clear and robust procedures to ensure that parents and carers are highly aware of the school's expectations.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides the school with clear strategic leadership and direction. He is well supported by senior leaders and governors, who share a commitment to improve the outcomes achieved by all students. Middle leaders are becoming more proficient in monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision and students’ progress, notably in identifying underperformance and providing appropriate intervention strategies. At present, they are less successful in sharing effective strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning, although this is now beginning to be addressed. A significant investment is being made in professional development training but has yet to have a full impact on students’ progress.

At the time of the inspection, there was no evidence of any discrimination and the school promotes equality for all pupils through secure monitoring and appropriate support. Progress for all groups of pupils, given their different starting points, is broadly similar, indicating that the school’s commitment to equal opportunities is translated effectively into practice.

Although the governing body has not yet developed its monitoring and evaluation role fully, it is making an increasingly important contribution to improvements by holding senior leaders to account for the school’s performance. It has ensured, for example, that safeguarding requirements are securely in place and that policy and procedures in that area are regularly scrutinised and consistently applied. Good practice in safeguarding and child protection is evident in all areas of the school’s work. For instance, checks on the suitability of adults to work with children are thorough.

The school develops students’ understanding of their religious, ethnic and socioeconomic community well, although more so in the local and global context than nationally. Leaders have ensured that students are developing into caring citizens who respect and value the views of others and that a set of common, shared values is embedded in every student.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3

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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	3

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire was broadly average and the school clearly enjoys their confidence and support. Most parents and carers who responded to the parental questionnaire are very positive about most aspects of the school’s work. They are particularly pleased about their children’s safety and experience as well as the information they receive from the school about their child’s progress. Additionally, a number of individual comments praised the good quality care, support and guidance given to students, particularly to those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those new to the school. In particular, some concerns were raised by parents and carers regarding the way the school helps their children to follow healthy lifestyles. Inspectors found that the promotion of healthy lifestyles is satisfactory, although the school accepts that it could do more to work with students, parents and carers in this respect to become good in the future.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bradon Forest School 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 339 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1031 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	125	37	190	56	16	5	5	1
The school keeps my child safe	130	38	197	58	8	2	2	1
The school informs me about my child’s progress	149	44	177	52	7	2	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	130	38	172	51	24	7	4	1
The teaching is good at this school	114	34	201	59	9	3	2	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	97	29	212	63	22	6	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	54	16	226	67	45	13	6	2
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)	103	30	202	60	12	4	3	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	100	29	202	60	18	5	4	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	106	31	182	54	28	8	7	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	82	24	205	60	21	6	7	2
The school is led and managed effectively	117	35	186	55	15	4	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	150	44	168	50	13	4	6	2

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.



5 December 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Bradon Forest School, Purton SN5 4AT

Thank you all for the warm welcome you gave to us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting and talking to you and were impressed with the pride most of you have in your school. We have found that yours is a satisfactory school, where you reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 11, and make steady progress because teaching and learning are satisfactory. Here are some of the things we particularly liked.

- You feel safe at school and your attendance is higher than in most other schools.
- You behave well, both in class and around the school. You get on well with the other students, look after each other and are aware of the needs of other people.
- Your headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body have good plans for how it can get even better.

The headteacher agrees with the inspection team that pupils could achieve more at school, and we have asked him to do two things.

- Improve attainment and increase the rate of progress that you make.
- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding lessons so that the quality of teaching and learning and of written feedback to students is more consistent across the school.

I am sure that you will help them by always working hard and aiming really high.

Yours sincerely

Michael Merchant
Lead inspector

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