

Brimsham Green School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109319
Local Authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	377910
Inspection dates	7–8 December 2011
Reporting inspector	James McNeillie HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1211
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Spooner
Headteacher	Alun Williams
Date of previous school inspection	3 February 2009
School address	Broad Lane Yate BS37 7LB
Telephone number	01454 868888
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Age group	11–19
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors visited a total of 47 lessons, or parts of lessons, taught by 45 teachers. Meetings were held with students, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and the school's improvement adviser. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation provided by the school, including that related to self-evaluation, safeguarding, the quality of teaching and students' achievement. Inspectors also considered the responses received to Ofsted's questionnaires from 322 parents and carers as well as a sample from students and members of staff.

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

- To what extent all groups of students are making good progress in each key stage, particularly boys, lower-ability students and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- How well the school's provision has supported potentially vulnerable students in making positive progress in all aspects of their lives.
- Whether teaching is sufficiently challenging and personalised to support students to make better-than-expected progress.
- Whether leadership at all levels has had a demonstrable impact on improving outcomes and is continuing to do so.

Information about the school

This is larger than the average-sized secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Most students are from White British backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with statements of special educational needs is above average, with most having statements for physical disabilities. There are currently 13 students supported by the school's specially resourced provision for students with physical disabilities. This provision is managed by the school and takes students from across the local authority area. The overall proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, with a mixture of those with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties, and moderate or specific learning needs.

The school holds humanities specialism with English as the lead subject. Awards held by the school include Healthy School, International School and Mentoring and Befriending.

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

Brimsham Green is a good school. Students' achievements, the quality of teaching and the curriculum, and the effectiveness of leadership are all good. The care and support students receive are outstanding. Physically disabled students accessing the specially resourced provision achieve equally as well as other students, both academically and personally. While the effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory overall, the academic progress the students make is improving quickly and nearing the many strengths of other aspects of this part of the school.

The school's inclusive and harmonious ethos is embodied in the strong relationships that exist between students and with members of staff. Differences between groups of students are embraced and celebrated. As a result, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully integrated and feel part of the school community. These good social skills are supported well by the positive behaviour in lessons and around the site. All of this, together with the strong safeguarding procedures, means that students feel exceptionally safe. Students show their enjoyment of school in their high levels of attendance.

Teaching is good and some practice is outstanding. This is because teachers have strong subject knowledge, build positive relationships and plan lessons that enable students to make good progress. Teaching assistants are used effectively to support students with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make progress and develop as independent learners. In the best lessons, students are heavily involved in their own learning as a result of teachers being imaginative and willing to take risks by planning varied and engaging activities. Teachers in these lessons use regular and effective strategies to assess how well students are developing in their understanding and make changes to the lesson as a result, so that no learning opportunities are missed. However, effective use of assessment to ensure all students are engaged in learning is not yet fully consistent across the school.

Excellent partnerships exist with other educational institutions, local employers and agencies that support students' well-being. Leaders know the school's strengths and relative weaknesses in detail. A thorough evaluation of teaching takes place and has resulted in targeted training and support for teachers. The impact of this can be seen in day-to-day classroom practice and, crucially, in the progress students make. A range of opportunities exist for teachers to share good practice and plans are in place to develop this further. Leadership of the school's specially resourced provision for students with physical disabilities ensures that these students are exceptionally

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well supported in taking a full part in school life and achieving at least as well as their peers. The specialist subjects make a good contribution to teacher training as well as supporting other schools in the local community. The engagement with parents and carers is outstanding and they are overwhelmingly positive about their children's experience. Since the previous inspection there have been a number of significant and sustained improvements: these are notably in the quality of teaching and the curriculum, the effectiveness of leadership and in the achievement of students, all of which means the school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and learning across the school by ensuring that:
 - all teachers use regular and effective assessment strategies to gauge students' understanding and alter planned activities when necessary
 - students are given even more opportunities to become involved in their own learning
 - the existing good opportunities for sharing best practice in teaching and the use of assessment are extended.

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

Over time, students' attainment on entry to the school has varied from slightly below to broadly average. When students leave Year 11, their attainment is average. Attainment has improved over the last three years and continues to improve quickly. For example, in 2011, the measure of students' overall attainment and the proportion attaining a grade C or above in five or more GCSE qualifications including English and mathematics were above average. These indicators together with students' current attainment, as shown by the school's accurate tracking system, qualifications already gained and the standards of their current work in lessons, confirm that they are making good progress. Progress in English, in the sciences and in humanities subjects is particularly strong. Students with physical disabilities, those with other special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress from their starting points. This is evident in the qualifications they achieve, their regular attendance, their good contribution to lessons and application of wider skills.

All groups of students apply themselves well in lessons. These positive attitudes and their good behaviour mean that learning takes place at a good pace. They are ambitious, respond enthusiastically to the school's high expectations and display good teamworking and independent skills in lessons. A lower-ability Year 11 English lesson with students who had specific learning and emotional needs highlighted many of these aspects. They worked exceptionally well together to understand how a playwright created a character. Students challenged and supported each other's thinking in a structured, calm and purposeful atmosphere which led to their outstanding progress. Students with physical disabilities have high expectations of

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their own achievement and are supported and challenged well by teachers, teaching assistants and their peers in lessons. Adjustments are made to ensure they can and do play as full a part in all lessons as possible, including in physical education, science and other practical subjects.

Students are well prepared for their future lives. This is evident in their ability to apply basic and personal skills well in a range of purposeful and relevant contexts, including in those that are unfamiliar to them. They have a good understanding of how to manage their finances and are clear about the next steps they need to take to be successful and responsible citizens. In the last three years, all those who left school at the end of Year 11 did so to continue in education or training or to start paid employment. They have a clear understanding of right from wrong and are able to resolve conflicts, including by being involved in restorative justice when necessary. They behave well, respect each other and their environment and can reflect on imagined and real situations. Students’ work and actions show that the International School Award has had a positive impact in developing their understanding of a range of cultures and traditions. In addition, many make good use of the opportunities available to engage in positive and thoughtful discussions on ethical issues. Students value the opportunity to take responsibility in school and community life and do so well in their work as peer mentors, members of the school parliament and responding to the surveys used by senior leaders to gather their views. All groups of students are represented in these activities. They feel listened to and gave inspectors specific examples of where their views had influenced decisions made. They understand and adopt healthy lifestyles well although some students acknowledge there is more they could do to stay healthy.

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	1
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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 contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	1

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?

Teachers use a range of interesting resources to engage students. Lessons are planned to take into account different levels of ability and, in the best, students and teachers use these resources to assess how much progress is being made. The impact of the school’s work on improving teachers’ questioning is evident in the way many teachers give their students time to think before answering. The strongest teaching expects students to explain their answers in detail. When learning is no more than satisfactory, it is often because the teacher talks for too long and misses opportunities to support students to develop as independent learners. High-quality written feedback helps students to know their next steps in learning but there is some inconsistency in practice across subjects.

A well-matched curriculum which is reviewed regularly meets the needs of different groups of students. A focus on developing students’ reading skills has supported improved achievement in English but also in other subjects across the curriculum. Enrichment activities, such as business and enterprise and global awareness days, help them to be well prepared for future life. The school’s specialist humanities subjects are popular and have positive outcomes. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities are available with a good uptake from different groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Highly effective care, guidance and support are given to all groups of students and this provision makes a substantial contribution to students’ overall achievement and well-being. Individualised support plans are in place for those with particular medical or learning needs and these plans are monitored carefully and adjusted as needed. The school’s work with those students who have been excluded from other schools and others who may be at risk of disengaging from education is excellent. The coordinated approach of staff, colleagues from external agencies and parents and carers results in students outperforming all expectations. The pastoral support for physically disabled students is similarly strong ensuring they are able to make the most of the opportunities available to them.

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

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How effective are leadership and management?

High expectations of all staff and groups of students have been established by the headteacher and the school’s senior leaders. These are shared by all staff and obvious in their work. The headteacher’s sharply focused and accurate identification of what the school needs to do to improve has had demonstrable impact on students’ achievement and well-being. Target setting for all aspects of students’ achievement is challenging and reviewed regularly; this is a significant factor in the improved outcomes. School improvement planning is thorough. Middle leaders are now much more involved in monitoring the quality of the areas for which they are responsible and play an important role in shaping whole-school developments. A structured cycle of lesson observations and scrutiny of students’ work is a strong, contributing factor to students’ good progress. The school’s resource-based provision is led well with leaders ensuring that teachers have detailed knowledge of the needs of these individual students resulting in their good and, occasionally, better progress.

Members of the governing body help to shape and evaluate the direction of the school. They are taking decisive action to increase their effectiveness by completing an audit of skills and expertise and acting on nationally recognised good practice. All school leaders monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the safeguarding policy, including ensuring good-quality training for all staff. Procedures to keep safe students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable are particularly strong and reflect the very positive wider school ethos. Leaders know the school’s context well and have taken decisive action to ensure that it is a cohesive community and that students understand the similarities and differences between their community and those of others in multicultural Britain and in the global context. Detailed analysis of achievement, behaviour patterns, attendance and other aspects of the school’s work, as well as the full integration in school life of students with a wide range special educational needs and/or disabilities, mean that there is good promotion of equal opportunities. Gaps that existed in the attainment of boys compared with that of girls and between students’ achievement in English and mathematics are narrowing.

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	1
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

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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	2

Sixth form

Students make satisfactory progress in the sixth form but this is improving quickly. There is less subject variation. No students failed to achieve a qualification in 2011, and from slightly below-average starting points, more students are achieving the highest grades. There is considerable strength in students' other outcomes which match those of the main school. Attendance is high and most students complete the courses they begin. The numbers of Year 11 students staying on into the sixth form have increased in each of the last three years. Students are heavily and successfully involved in mentoring younger students and acting as ambassadors for the school. Many also contribute well to the local community by assisting with events for older people and younger children as well as volunteering their time and support for adults and children with disabilities. Successful exchange trips to Uganda, and the work done by those students on their return, have helped to develop cultural awareness. The development of these wider skills, and the exceptionally low number of students not in education, employment or training when they leave the sixth form, shows they are prepared well for future life. Students experience good and, sometimes, inspirational teaching. Teaching and assessment are used effectively to enable students to learn well and this is contributing to their quickly improving progress. The curriculum provision is well matched to their needs, and the good partnership with a local school means that a wide range of academic and vocational courses are on offer. The care they receive is excellent and students feel very well supported to take the next steps in their education. A strong team with a good balance of expertise and strengths lead the sixth form, analyse students' outcomes in detail and are taking decisive action to improve all aspects of provision. Their impact can be seen in strongly improving student outcomes. Although outcomes overall are satisfactory because progress over time has been satisfactory, the combination of strong provision and effective leadership is having a substantial impact on improving students' progress.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

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Views of parents and carers

A higher-than-average proportion of parents and carers responded to Ofsted's questionnaire. The overwhelming majority stated that they were happy with their children's experience at school and that the school kept their children safe. Many made positive comments including in relation to the school's leadership, the commitment of teachers and transition arrangements which matched the inspection findings. Isolated individual concerns were raised by very few parents and carers. These concerns were explored in detail by the inspection team. Students told inspectors that if they were unhappy about a situation, they felt confident there was someone with whom they could discuss it and were sure that it would be dealt with.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Brimsham Green 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 322 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1211 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	126	39	180	56	9	3	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	144	45	169	52	5	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	152	47	160	50	5	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	132	41	181	56	3	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	127	39	182	57	6	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	118	37	176	55	14	4	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	79	25	205	64	23	7	2	1
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)	121	38	178	55	9	3	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	116	36	191	59	5	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	128	40	163	51	11	3	3	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	97	30	193	60	7	2	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	161	50	148	46	2	1	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	167	52	149	46	1	0	1	0

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.



9 December 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Brimsham Green School, Yate, BS37 7LB

Thank you for being so welcoming when I visited your school with my colleagues and for the time many of you took to let us know your views.

We judged that your school is a good school. This is because you make good progress in your learning between Years 7 and 11 and you are well prepared for the next stage of your lives. We also agreed with you and your parents and carers that Mr Williams and his team are doing a good job. Students in the sixth form have made satisfactory progress over time but this is increasing as a result of the good teaching and the increasingly varied curriculum that is on offer.

Your good behaviour makes a positive contribution to your learning. The respectful relationships you have with each other and with staff mean that this is a cohesive and pleasant school in which to learn. Very many of you, including those of you with particular medical, social or learning needs, told us that you feel safe and exceptionally well cared for at school. We agreed with you. Your attendance is excellent and has increased since the last time inspectors visited the school, so well done for that.

The teaching you experience is good and some is outstanding. We have asked the school to make more lessons outstanding. One of the ways we have suggested teachers do this is by taking more opportunities during lessons to assess how well you are learning and then make changes to what has been planned if necessary. Another suggestion is that teachers involve you more in your own learning and encourage you to become even more independent. You can help by continuing to respond very positively when teachers ask you to work on your own or in pairs, as well as by letting teachers know when you are finding lessons difficult or too easy.

We would like to wish you every success for your future.

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie
Her Majesty's Inspector

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