

Bramdean School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Bramdean School is a non-selective independent co-educational school in Exeter. It provides for pupils aged from three to eighteen years. There are currently 135 pupils on roll. The large majority are of White British heritage, although a few pupils speak English as an additional language. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the kindergarten. There are no children entitled to free education for three- and four-year-olds. Most sixth form pupils continue their education at university. The school was established in 1901. It aims to provide pupils with 'a well-rounded education where teamwork, cooperation, self-discipline and good manners are observed alongside the teaching of academic subjects by highly qualified staff'. The school was last inspected in 2009.

Evaluation of the school

Bramdean School meets its aims successfully and provides an outstanding quality of education. Improvements since the last inspection have secured an outstanding curriculum which, together with the outstanding quality of teaching, promotes pupils' outstanding progress, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development continues to be outstanding and contributes to outstanding behaviour. Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. The school meets all of the regulations for registration, including those for safeguarding children which were not met at the time of the previous inspection. However, there is no three-year plan to fulfil the school's duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Quality of education

The outstanding curriculum is supported by specialist facilities for physics, chemistry, biology, art, drama, music, information and communication technology, food technology, physical education and games. The curriculum consists also of English, mathematics, geography, history, religious studies, swimming, French, German, Spanish and, in the sixth form, sociology. Citizenship and personal, social and health education are taught across the curriculum. They, like all subjects, are supported by plans and schemes of work that promote pupils' rapid progress. A special feature of

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

the curriculum is the chapel choir which has performed on national and international television and radio.

The curriculum is enhanced by an exceptional range of extra-curricular activities and residential trips. They include the Duke of Edinburgh Award, outdoor pursuits, horse riding, a variety of sports, choir, peripatetic music lessons, drama, chess and visits to other countries such as France, Germany, Spain and Iceland. The strong emphasis given to personal development helps pupils to become well-rounded individuals who are knowledgeable about a wide range of issues and able to develop and pursue new interests to a high level.

The curriculum in the kindergarten provides an excellent balance of all areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and the more formal aspects of the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) and mathematics. Special attention is given to developing children's understanding of the rhythm and patterns of language through rhymes and action songs. This ensures that pupils enter the pre-preparatory department at the age of six as confident readers and independent writers.

Across the school, pupils are prepared very well for the next stage of their education and for the responsibilities of adult life. Careers afternoons involve talks from a wide range of employers. Pupils enter the preparatory school at the age of seven years and follow the Independent School's Common Entrance syllabus in all subjects. They move to the senior school at the age of 12 and can study for any number of GCSE examinations from the wide range on offer. In the sixth form, most pupils take three or four subjects at AS and A level in preparation for university. Support for disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and pupils who speak English as an additional language, is very effective in enabling them to progress as well as their peers.

As a result of outstanding teaching and assessment, pupils thrive and make exceptionally good progress. From the pre-preparatory department upwards pupils benefit from specialist teaching. Pupils say that their teachers are very encouraging and generous with their time in supporting them outside of lessons. The extremely positive relationships that pupils have with staff help them to become confident learners. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, including of examination requirements, and high expectations of pupils. They demonstrate new skills clearly, often using interactive whiteboards, and ask probing questions to check and extend pupils' understanding. Their regular assessment of pupils' work provides teachers with a thorough knowledge of pupils' attainment and their strengths and weaknesses. While this informs teachers' support for individuals in lessons, including support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs or those who speak English as an additional language, it is not used consistently to challenge more able pupils to reach the highest levels in all subjects.

While pupils reach top grades in subjects across the curriculum, notably history, more pupils attain A* and A grades at GCSE and GCE A level in mathematics and the sciences than in other subjects. This is because practical investigation and problem

solving in these lessons engender an infectious enthusiasm and enjoyment of learning and challenge pupils to think and learn independently. In a mathematics lesson, for example, pupils challenged each other to clarify their thinking through creating universal sets in pairs and groups and explaining their methods. Pupils are not encouraged to develop such independence in all subjects. The mathematics teacher was seen to assess constantly the understanding of all pupils during the lesson and she adapted her teaching to meet individual needs. This included accelerating the learning of the most able by the use of probing questions and higher-level activities. In this, the teacher is supported by her detailed monitoring of pupils' progress. Progress tracking in the sciences and information and communication technology also promotes consistently good examination grades. There is no systematic approach to monitoring progress across the school to support all teachers. The few questionnaires completed on Ofsted's 'Parent View' site indicate that parents and carers are happy with the work of the school, but would appreciate more information on their children's progress. Inspectors found that school reports are consistent in detailing the work covered, but they tend to focus on attitudes to the subject rather than indicating clearly the amount of progress made.

Over many years, pupils have made consistently outstanding progress at GCSE. In 2012, all pupils attained five or more GCSEs at A* to C grades. Progress at GCE A level is good overall, and exceptional in the sciences. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage progress exceptionally well and their achievement is well above the expectations for their age. This is because their progress is assessed constantly during lessons and activities are tailored to their individual needs. The outstanding teaching sets high expectations and challenges the children to think and learn independently. The quality of singing by the chapel choir is at a very high standard.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' exemplary personal development and outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are promoted by the aims and ethos of the school which enable learners to become confident individuals and to appreciate their own worth. Pupils' extremely positive attitudes to school are shown in their high levels of attendance and willingness to participate in lessons and in the broader range of school activities where they often take the initiative. The breadth of activities on offer ensures that each pupil has the opportunity to excel at something. Pupils are very courteous to others and proud of their contribution to the school and the wider community, for example through the choir and charity work. They have a very good knowledge of their own and other cultures and, in lessons such as history, make thoughtful and reflective responses to world issues. They show care, respect and consideration for other cultural traditions. Consequently, pupils with different faiths and those attending the school from other countries feel that they are valued and integrated fully into the life of the school and that their beliefs are respected. One pupil spoke for many when she said, 'Everyone accepts you for who you are.'

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage develop strong relationships with others, and respect and tolerate each other's differences. All children show that they are developing a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and

healthy. Older pupils say that they feel very safe in school and that they are confident to turn to their form tutors with any concerns. 'Parent View' indicates that almost all parents and carers agree that the school keeps their children safe.

Pupils' consistently thoughtful behaviour is an outstanding factor in their successful learning and creates an extremely positive school ethos. Pupils are highly considerate and very supportive of each other in lessons and other activities. They respond to the staff's high expectations of them, and conduct themselves around the school maturely and sensibly. Pupils of all ages get on noticeably well with each other. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage demonstrate exceptionally positive behaviour and high levels of self-control.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

This area is good rather than outstanding as the school has not addressed a few minor health and safety issues. These were brought to its attention during the inspection. Good quality of care for pupils is seen in the high level of commitment of staff, including the matron, to promote pupils' health and safety. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils have been improved since the previous inspection. The child protection policy now meets requirements, is reviewed regularly, and staff training, including for the designated officer, is up to date. Risk assessments are carried out carefully. Any pupils at risk are identified early and effective arrangements are put in place by the special educational needs coordinator to keep them engaged. Pupils are supervised well in school and on trips. Instances of bullying and other forms of harassment are rare. Inspectors could find no evidence to support the small minority of responses on 'Parent View' that indicate the school does not address bullying effectively. Comprehensive policies and procedures ensure that pupils are protected and supported well. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, all adults are deployed well to support children's learning and welfare. Arrangements to promote good behaviour are very effective and result in a calm environment for learning. Pupils are keen to achieve healthy lifestyles and to keep safe. The school works well with parents, carers and other agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe. The Early Years Foundation Stage welfare requirements are met.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

All of the required checks on the suitability of staff to work with children have been carried out and details are recorded appropriately in a single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school is accommodated in a large, well-maintained Georgian house which has been extended to include a wide range of specialist facilities and a chapel. The games field is opposite the school. Excellent use is made of the premises and site to provide an extensive curriculum. For example, the school has covered the playground with a glass roof and added astro-turf to equip it for all-weather use. Since the previous inspection, access to the outdoor area for the kindergarten has been improved.

Provision of information

The school provides, or makes available, all of the required information for parents, carers and others. The information is clear, accurate and up to date.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The complaints procedures meet regulatory requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').³

In order to comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.⁴

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- devise a whole-school system for monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress
- ensure information from the system is used consistently by all teachers to challenge more able pupils to reach higher grades and to inform school reports
- engage pupils in developing independent learning skills consistently across all subjects, for example through investigating, researching, discussing and presenting findings.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made.

⁴ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs	✓			
How well pupils make progress in their learning	✓			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Preparatory and Senior Day School		
Date school opened	1901		
Age range of pupils	3–18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 84	Girls: 51	Total: 135
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,848–£9,348		
Address of school	Richmond Lodge Homefield Road Heavitree Exeter Devon EX1 2QR		
Telephone number	01392 273387		
Email address	info@bramdeanschool.com		
Headteacher	Miss Diane Stoneman		
Proprietors	Miss Diane Stoneman and Mr Antony Connet		

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.



21 September 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bramdean School, Exeter EX1 2QR

Thank you for contributing to the inspection of your school. The inspectors enjoyed meeting you and seeing you at work. The following is a summary of our findings.

The quality of education provided by your school is outstanding. You have a wide choice of subjects in the curriculum, and of clubs and visits outside lessons. The facilities, including your games field, are very good. Outstanding teaching promotes your excellent progress and enables you to attain high standards, particularly in mathematics and the sciences. The singing by the chapel choir is of a very high standard. Children in the kindergarten make excellent progress also because of the outstanding teaching.

Your personal development is outstanding and supports your excellent behaviour. You told us that you all get along very well together and we found that this was the case. You told us also that you feel very safe in school and the parents and carers who responded to our 'Parent View' agree. Your school takes good care of you. The school meets all the required regulations, but needs to plan for better access to the curriculum for disabled pupils. To help more of you to reach the highest grades in all subjects, we have recommended some improvements in monitoring your progress and in engaging you in developing independence in more of your lessons. You can help, for example by developing your skills in investigating, researching, discussing and presenting your findings.

I wish you success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Sue Frater
Her Majesty's Inspector