

Briarwood School

Briar Way, Bristol, BS16 4EA

Inspection dates 11–12 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- This is a school that is improving. Teaching and learning have got better since the previous inspection and are now good.
- Students make good progress regardless of their age or ethnicity.
- Students with the most profound and complex needs are exceptionally well cared for and taught.
- Students make good progress in English and mathematics.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium make good progress in line with their peers.
- The Nexus provides a safe haven for learning. Students make excellent progress while they are there.
- The sixth form is good. Senior leaders have increased the range of 'working life' experiences and activities for students.
- Excellent relationships exist between students and staff. The application of high-quality support systems and procedures ensures that behaviour is good and students are kept safe.
- A major strength of the school is the way that personal, social and health education (PSHE) is threaded through the school day. The PSHE curriculum helps to increase students' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and safety awareness.
- Leaders, managers and members of the governing body have an accurate view of the school. They know what needs to be done to make the school outstanding. They are working well towards this aim.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Teaching is not consistently outstanding. Additional adults are not always efficiently used to drive students' learning and achievements.
- Although improving, the attainment of students eligible for the pupil premium is not as high as that of their peers.
- Students' personal behaviour plans are not always followed as closely as they should be, in order to maintain good or better behaviour in lessons.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with half a day’s notice.
- Inspectors observed teaching in 14 lessons, the majority of which were jointly observed with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. The lead inspector undertook two ‘learning walks’, visiting all classrooms at both sites. Students were also observed during breaks between lessons, at lunchtime and at the end of the school day.
- The inspectors held meetings with the senior leaders and managers, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. Discussions were held with students during lessons.
- Inspectors evaluated a large range of documents, including the school’s self-evaluation, records of monitoring teaching, and data about students’ achievements and attendance. Documents relating to safeguarding and students’ welfare were scrutinised. Students’ books and work were seen during lessons.
- There were no views recorded by parents or carers on the online Ofsted Parent View survey. Inspectors took account of a recent survey of parents and carers conducted by the school following a similar format to the Ofsted one. They also considered the views of 34 staff who returned questionnaires.

Inspection team

Steffi Penny, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Robert Arnold

Additional Inspector

Cliff Mainey

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is on two sites about a mile apart. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision, primary department and sixth form occupy the same site; at the other, there is the secondary department and a separate building housing the senior Nexus provision. The Nexus provides alternative education for a small number of students who have challenging behaviour, who are at risk of exclusion, or who have been excluded from other schools.
- The school provides activities during the school holidays for current students. There are several set times throughout the year when siblings of students can also attend the activities offered.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs. The majority of students have profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) or severe learning difficulties (SLD). Nearly all have needs related to complex medical difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders, challenging behaviour and/or sensory impairment.
- The majority of students are non-verbal communicators and most require signs and symbols to fully communicate with other people.
- Just over half the students are from different minority ethnic groups, the largest groups being of Black African and Pakistani heritages. The majority of these students are at the early stages of learning English.
- The school does not enter students early for external examinations.
- The majority of students are eligible for the pupil premium. This is additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority and students with a parent or carer in the armed services.
- The additional government grant in Year 7 to provide additional support for students who had failed to reach expected standards at the end of Year 6 applies to all students. Its specific impact cannot therefore be measured.
- The school receives 'sports premium' funding for students in the primary department.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching is consistently outstanding by:
 - developing the understanding of additional adults so they support students' learning better
 - making sure that teachers use additional adults more effectively to raise students' achievement
 - adapting activities in lessons still further to accelerate the progress of students eligible for the pupil premium funding
 - sharing more often, and more widely, the outstanding practice that exists within the school.
- Improve behaviour so that it is outstanding by ensuring that all procedures and systems related to behaviour management are consistently followed.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students, including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, regardless of their starting points, make equally good progress. This is because there is a strong focus on their needs from the moment they enter the school. Annual and mid-year analysis helps to identify those pupils who are not achieving their challenging targets. Any students not on track are then provided with a specific programme of support until they catch up.
- In 2012/13, the end-of-year school information showed that the attainment gap between students eligible for the pupil premium and their peers was not narrowing. However, those eligible for the pupil premium were making good progress.
- Mid-year school information for 2013/14 shows an improved rate of progress for those eligible for the pupil premium in all key stages. This is in part due to there being clearer links between teachers' planning and the identification of individual students' learning needs. It is also because all students are making better progress through the matched-ability grouping system that the school has started to use. Nevertheless, the school is aware that the achievement gap needs to be more swiftly closed.
- The most-able students make good progress overall. However, some teaching does not include hard enough work for students to do, so they do not achieve as well as they should.
- School tracking by year group and by different student groups is being used well to identify changes that need to be made to lessons. For example, it identified that a group of students with additional sensory impairment were not achieving as well as others. The school has employed two support staff, who have received specialist training, to work one-to-one with the students. As a result, the gap has closed and these students are now attaining in line with the others.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress. They are entered for a range of external courses that they can build upon when they leave school. The students are helped to run the 'BriarBiz', gaining enterprise and work-based skills. Here, students sell vegetable bags containing seasonal organic vegetables, print hoodies and make Christmas cakes (in season).

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good. There are some examples of pupils' learning and their past work which is reflective of even better teaching and learning throughout the school.
- In more effective teaching, activities are well planned with clear links made with students' targets and levels of attainment. There are well-established routines that are followed to encourage students to understand and prepare for what they are going to do next. These include pictorial timetables and ritual songs that help shape the day for students, preparing them for the next activity.
- All staff have high expectations and work together as a well-coordinated team. For example, before lessons start students are sensitively helped to make sure that they are comfortable and ready to learn.
- Staff have an in-depth understanding of the best ways to help each individual student learn. Music and repetition of ideas through a variety of ways help students learn well. For example, in a mathematics lesson, students learned about pairing and sequencing patterns when counting in twos by listening to music rhythms tapped out on instruments, feeling shapes and matching images.
- There are plenty of additional adults to support teachers with helping students to learn. However, additional adults are not always used effectively by teachers to maximise students' learning. Frequently, additional adults record what students have learned and what they have not grasped. However, they do not always provide the most effective help to students and this

hinders learning.

- Where students do not make good progress in lessons, most notably the more-able, it is generally because the work given to them is too easy. Students sometimes have to wait too long during turn-taking activities, such as at choosing time, which slows their pace of learning.
- Staff in the senior Nexus are experienced and have specialist knowledge of behavioural support that they use to plan learning activities. Lessons follow extremely careful and individually planned activities for each student. Students in the Nexus make excellent progress at a rapid rate. This was clearly seen in a lesson where students maximised their learning through using specific noises to help identify and name different body parts.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good overall. There are examples of excellent behaviour resulting from high-quality support by additional adults in lessons. Inspectors saw well-chosen, pre-planned strategies being used to calm students' anxieties so that challenging behaviour did not escalate and so learning continued. However, the strategies listed in individual students' behaviour plans, and displayed on classroom walls, were not always referred to; when this happened, standards of behaviour dipped and learning was hampered.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Class teams monitor the safety of students. The PSHE curriculum helps to teach students to keep safe at home and when in school. Those students who access it know how to keep safe using the internet.
- Staff are experienced and well trained, for example in the use of de-escalation and positive handling techniques. The use of restraints is kept to a minimum and school records show that the need for them reduces over time.
- The senior Nexus has proved to be a resounding success. The Nexus students have extremely challenging behaviour patterns. Staff swiftly act to reduce possible outbursts through following the detailed behaviour plans and established routines. This and the high expectations of staff ensure that students' behaviour improves and they are better able to develop their academic, personal and social skills.
- Staff are very mindful of what bullying is. Students are encouraged to report incidents of unkindness or bullying through the very strong relationships with staff.
- The school ensures that the views of students are listened to, especially through 'circle time'. Regular parental and carer questionnaires enable families to share their views, too.
- Improving the attendance of students has been a school focus. Many of the students have complex medical needs and are sometimes too ill to attend school. The school works very closely with those families who keep students at home unnecessarily. As a consequence, attendance has improved year-on-year over the last three years.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management are good. Middle leaders are increasingly effective in initiating improved ways of doing things and helping senior leaders monitor and evaluate the work of the school. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the sixth form are good.
- The quality of school assessment has improved over the last three years. Judgements made by the school are accurate and externally moderated.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There are good opportunities for students to take part in activities relating to sports and the arts. There are good links with other schools through dance and the end-of-term show, which parents and carers attend.
- Excellent relationships exist between staff, students and their families. The school has four family link workers that work closely with families, for example, providing translation services.
- Staff are highly committed to the school and all that it does. There is a shared passion to help

students to have the best possible future. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. Providing equal opportunities for the whole school community is a core part of the school's ethos.

- Community links are a significant strength. Through the 'PROPS' charity there are good opportunities for students aged 19 to 25 years to participate in enterprise and vocational work. This enables students to prepare for the next steps in their life and to retain supportive links with the school after they leave.
- At the time of this inspection, the school's website displayed policies and documentation that were out of date. However, the internally held documentation relating to safeguarding and to support students' behaviour is of a very high quality. Governor involvement is well planned. Case studies help them to monitor the success of interventions. The governing body is also presented with succinct, yet fully detailed, documents on students' behaviour on a regular basis. The related policies are pithy, easy to read and follow, with references to current statutory requirements and further academic reading. The school is in the process of ensuring that all documentation, internal and on its website, is of the same high calibre.
- Senior leaders are aware that, although much that the school does is good, with some outstanding features, too much inconsistency remains. For example, stronger links need to be made between the behaviour development plan and the impact of the planning on raising achievement. More information needs to be gathered about the impact on students' achievement from the use of the sports premium funding.
- The leaders and managers of the school are not complacent. They have already identified where improvements can be made and have set about instigating them. For example, a primary Nexus has been started for a couple of students who needed a more flexible timetable that could respond to their needs on a daily basis. The initial outcomes show significant reductions in incidents of misbehaviour.
- The school works closely with the local authority school improvement services in order to enhance its own provision. The school also provides specialist special educational needs support for other schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a good understanding of the school's achievement information. Members visit the school to monitor progress, for example through learning walks that have a specific focus and, as a result, they have a good understanding of the quality of teaching. They have improved the ways that good teaching is to be rewarded and how any underperformance will be tackled. Teachers' pay awards are now more closely related to the achievement of students.
 - The governing body monitors performance information and the use of monies spent through the pupil premium well. The intended outcomes for students from the spending of the sports premium funding are not clear enough. Consequently, the governing body cannot sufficiently challenge the school on the way the funds are being spent.
 - Members of the governing body receive appropriate training. The governing body meets its statutory duties, including for safeguarding.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	109410
Local authority	City of Bristol
Inspection number	432065

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

Type of school	Not applicable
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	87
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	20
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Shovelton
Headteacher	David Hussey
Date of previous school inspection	23–24 March 2011
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