

# Bramdean School

Richmond Lodge, Homefield Road, Heavitree, Exeter, Devon EX1 2QR

## Inspection dates

15–17 January 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders, including the proprietor, do not evaluate their actions or strategies rigorously. As a result, leaders do not identify weaknesses quickly enough.
- Senior leaders do not have an in-depth view of the quality of education. They do not hold teachers stringently to account. As a result, there has been a decline in the quality of education since the previous inspection.
- Leaders do not have a shared understanding of the school's priorities, including professional development for teachers. This slows the rate of improvement.
- Leadership roles are not well defined. Consequently, leaders do not have a detailed overview of their areas of responsibility.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils are not consistently high. Consequently, pupils make common spelling, grammar and punctuation errors in their writing.
- Some teaching does not make the best use of assessment information to plan lessons to meet the full range of pupils' needs, including for the most able pupils.
- The teaching of calculation in the juniors is not well developed to enable pupils to apply the most efficient methods to solve problems.
- Leaders do not provide high-quality books and other literature for pupils to read and enjoy, especially for older pupils.

### The school has the following strengths

- Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school, including communication with staff.
- Staff promote a positive 'family' ethos successfully. Pupils' behaviour and conduct in lessons and around the school are good.
- Leaders have ensured that the independent school standards are met in full.
- Children get off to a good start in the kindergarten. They are happy and make good progress, especially in reading and phonics.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of pupils to produce consistently high-quality work, particularly for the most able pupils
  - ensuring that pupils' writing is of a high quality across a range of subjects and that common errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar are eliminated
  - ensuring that teachers use assessment information effectively to plan work that meets the full range of pupils' needs and builds on what pupils already know, understand and can do
  - implementing and evaluating an effective calculation policy to enable pupils to gain greater fluency and efficiency in their number work to solve a range of problems.
- Improve the effectiveness of all leaders, including the proprietor, by:
  - implementing rigorous processes and systems to challenge teachers and hold them firmly to account
  - clarifying roles and responsibilities so that leaders are fully aware of their duties to undertake more effective monitoring and evaluation, particularly of teaching, learning and assessment
  - implementing and reviewing a high-quality ongoing professional development programme for teachers based on their individual needs and the school's priorities
  - reviewing and improving the range and quality of books and literature for pupils, particularly those entering the juniors.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Leaders including the proprietor, who is also the headteacher, do not check or evaluate the impact of their actions well enough. As a result, leaders do not have an accurate and detailed view of the quality of education. This has led to a decline in the quality of education since the previous inspection.
- Leaders do not hold teachers firmly to account. Systems to monitor and evaluate teachers' performance lack sufficient focus on pupils' outcomes, for example when checking pupils' standards in writing. Consequently, weaknesses are not identified or addressed quickly enough, which presents a barrier to good achievement for pupils.
- Leaders do not have a common understanding of the school's priorities for improvement. Similarly, individual leaders, such as subject leaders, do not have well-constructed plans with clear objectives and purpose to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This leads to too many inconsistencies in raising pupil achievement.
- Leaders do not have well-defined job descriptions or effective performance reviews to enable them to fulfil their duties well enough. At times, leaders lack the skills, knowledge and understanding of what is expected of them in holding others to account.
- Leaders' record-keeping is not sufficiently detailed, including the tracking and use of pupil-progress information to enable leaders to check how well pupils achieve over time. However, this has been recognised and senior leaders are now using a new system to start organising a wide range of information more coherently. This is already having a positive impact in some areas, for example in collating evidence for the school's single central record for safeguarding.
- Leaders have been too slow in identifying the lack of quality books and other reading materials for pupils, particularly those who leave kindergarten and are developing as independent readers. Books are often past their best and are not enticing. Consequently, some pupils are not as motivated to enjoy reading as they should be. This is a barrier to their reading development.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) works effectively with other teachers to identify and support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils' individual plans, including education, health and care plans (EHC plans) are reviewed and adapted well. This supports the pupils to make strong progress academically, socially and emotionally.
- Leaders do not evaluate the school's curriculum well enough to know how this aspect of their work is promoting the school's aims and intentions, including for sixth-form studies. However, the school does provide effective activities, including clubs and visits to promote the school's aims. Consequently, pupils are motivated and prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Leaders provide high-quality opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, children in the kindergarten have learned about Chinese celebrations, and the school's religious syllabus includes learning about the world's major faiths.

- Leaders ensure that pupils learn about British values through meaningful activities. For example, current pupils have retraced the steps of former pupils who died in active service in the Great War. They visited the Somme and paid their respects at the graves. Other trips, such as to the Houses of Parliament and local mosques, reinforce values of democracy and tolerance in a sensitive and meaningful way.
- Leaders and staff effectively promote a sharing, vibrant and welcoming community that reflects the school's 'family' feel and ethos. Parents are effusive in their praise of the school, particularly in how staff are open and approachable. This is a happy school where pupils, staff and parents alike feel valued and respected.

## **Governance**

- The school does not have a governing body. The proprietor is also the headteacher.
- The headteacher does not use 'checks and balances' to audit or review key aspects of the school's or her own performance. This contributes towards some inaccuracies in self-evaluation and impedes the rate of improvement in the school.
- However, legal requirements, including the duty to meet the independent school standards, are fully met and the school is compliant with its registration details.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and other staff know the pupils well. They are well trained in current legislation and practice to be vigilant in keeping pupils safe. New systems to maintain records and information are improving the school's approach to safeguarding.
- Leaders are tenacious and 'go the extra mile', including, for example, requesting original documentation from supply teachers when they attend school. Safeguarding induction and updates ensure that staff are knowledgeable and know how to refer concerns to the designated safeguarding leader.
- The designated safeguarding leader works effectively with external agencies, including the police and social care, when required. Staff are diligent and tenacious in following up referrals. Leaders are proactive in their safeguarding practice. For example, they were the first independent school in Exeter to get involved in 'Operation Encompass' (which involves a notification from the police regarding incidents of domestic abuse at home).
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe. They understand and are aware of potential risks in their lives, including e-safety and cyber bullying. Pupils know where to go and how to evacuate in the event of a fire or emergency.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

## **Requires improvement**

- Teachers' expectations of pupils are not high enough across the range of subjects, including in the sixth form. Pupils are not effectively supported and challenged to write consistently well. This results in some poor-quality work and impedes pupils' progress. Poor expectations of pupils' handwriting sometimes lead to deterioration and regression from their previous work.

- Teachers do not consistently use assessment information effectively to build well on pupils' prior skills, knowledge and understanding. Extension and challenge work for the most able pupils in reading, writing and mathematics is not sufficiently well planned. This limits the progress of some pupils.
- The quality of teaching in mathematics, particularly to deepen pupils' knowledge of number, fractions and place value, is variable. The school's teaching of calculation skills and problem-solving methods is not consistently secure, which weakens pupils' progress.
- However, teachers use their strong specialist subject knowledge to probe pupils' thinking through thought-provoking questioning. They use this subject knowledge to adjust lessons spontaneously to support pupils, for example in geography, mathematics and computing in the senior school.
- Teachers use resources well to help pupils acquire relevant subject-specific skills. For example, young children are taught to handle knives safely to slice fruit in home economics. This supports pupils to gain a range of essential skills in readiness for key stages 4 and 5 education.
- Teachers set effective 'prep' (home learning) tasks as a means to prepare, consolidate or check pupils' knowledge. Home learning is an integral part of teaching and learning and contributes well to pupils' learning.
- Teachers have positive relationships with pupils throughout the school. Teachers encourage pupils to participate in lessons and work collaboratively. Consequently, pupils enjoy the different range of activities and the experiences these bring, including through planned trips and visits.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are proud of the school and enjoy making valuable contributions to its day-to-day running. Of particular merit is the daily assembly in the school's chapel. This starts the day with a tangible sense of awe and wonder, led by the high-quality singing from the choir, to strongly promote the school's ethos. This provides a unique opportunity for pupils and staff to share high-quality time for spiritual and personal reflection.
- The school's positive and inclusive ethos enables pupils to feel valued and respected, including those with SEND and the few pupils who join the school who speak English as an additional language (EAL). Pupils with different needs settle quickly, which supports their academic and emotional development.
- Pupils have opportunities for personal development through a range of additional responsibilities, such as being team captains in sports teams or singing in the choir. In the latter, the stringent challenges of being a chorister promote strong personal development, including such qualities as perseverance, self-discipline and teamwork.
- Leaders and staff provide effective support and advice to pupils/students in choosing options and managing transition points to and from the sixth form. Pupils have access to different work experience placements and careers advice for entry to work and/or university places.

- However, on occasion, pupils' study time and free lessons are not well directed or sufficiently focused, for example in key stage 4 and mathematics. This means that pupils do not maximise their learning time to get the very best from these sessions.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Staff set and maintain high expectations of pupils' conduct and behaviour, both in lessons and when moving around school or at breaktimes. Consequently, pupils are courteous and polite to each other, staff and visitors, which contributes to an orderly environment.
- Pupils' attendance is good. They like coming to school and enjoy the range of activities and opportunities available. Parents also confirm that the school promotes positive behaviour, which they feel is an essential part of the everyday life and culture at Bramdean.
- Pupils of all ages socialise well together. They are respectful and tolerant towards each other. This contributes to the strong sense of community.
- Pupils feel safe and say that bullying is very rare. They have confidence in staff to tackle any rare incidents of bullying. The effective rewards system promotes positive behaviour and effectively reinforces individual successes and achievements.
- On occasion, when teaching is not good enough, pupils become distracted and fail to take sufficient pride in their work. This reduces the quality of their work and leads to examples of some poorly presented work, including poor handwriting.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching mean that not all pupils are making the progress that they are capable of across the school, including lower-achieving pupils who need to catch up quickly.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work confirms that the overwhelming majority of pupils are working at least in line with age-related expectations, including in English and mathematics. However, pupils' writing across the range of subjects is sometimes weak. For example, there are recurring issues with spelling, punctuation and grammar across the school.
- The most able pupils are not routinely challenged well enough to reach the standards of which they are capable. This is reflected, for example, in the small number of students reaching the highest grades in their key stage 4 national examinations. However, most pupils did attain five A\* to C GCSE examination outcomes, including English and mathematics, to prepare them well for sixth form and/or college.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of mathematics are not consistently strong enough. Some pupils are not secure in their understanding of number and calculation. In junior school workbooks, there is limited evidence of fluency and progression in some pupils' number work.
- Most pupils read fluently and with understanding to meet age-appropriate expectations as they move through the school. However, a very small number find comprehension difficult due to circumstances, such as EAL pupils.

- However, EAL pupils and those with SEND generally make strong progress through their targeted individual plans. This is reflected in pupils' reading, writing and mathematical development. The SENCo ensures that academic targets are appropriate and reviewed regularly to support pupils' progress.
- Pupils develop a good knowledge of phonics in the kindergarten. This helps Nursery- and Reception-aged children to make a strong start. It enables them to gain the knowledge, speed and confidence to read and write convincingly. This also helps the lower-achieving and/or EAL children to catch up.
- Pupils' work in other subjects, for example history and religious studies, is in line with national expectations. Schemes of work and curricular planning follow age-appropriate frameworks, such as the end of key stages 1 and 2 national curriculum objectives, the 'common entrance at 13+' and accredited syllabuses for GCSEs and A-level studies. There are particular strengths in geography and science in the senior school, leading to better outcomes for pupils in these subjects.
- The onward destinations of students when they leave the school are positive. Most students gain access to colleges, university or training to further their ambitions and careers.

### Early years provision

**Good**

- In the kindergarten (including Nursery- and Reception-aged children), the teaching, learning and assessment are effective. Adults plan lessons and activities matched well to the children's different needs. As a result, children make good progress and are well prepared for the next stage in their education, including those with SEND.
- Staff have high expectations of the children, for example, during the inspection, Reception children were making accurate comments and observations about the weather and temperature. They showed good understanding of how ice is formed. These expectations provide children with a strong foundation for learning across the early years curriculum, including challenging the most able children.
- The class teacher's use of assessment is effective. She knows the needs of every child well and uses this to plan next steps in learning. This is particularly strong in phonics to support children's reading.
- Children are engaged and curious. They are able to express themselves and make valuable contributions to their learning in a variety of ways. Children enjoy a range of appropriate activities, including painting and playing in the sandpit. However, the school's designated early years outdoor space is not well developed or planned to meet the children's needs well as part of their daily entitlement in all seasons.
- The early years curriculum is strong. Children learn and play effectively across all areas of learning, including physical development and their personal, social and emotional development. For example, children gain independence, such as when using scissors on their own to cut shapes.
- However, activities to further children's writing are not as strong. These sometimes restrict the children from practising or applying their own writing freely in different situations.

- Adults interact positively with the children throughout the day to develop their social and personal skills. As a result, children are well prepared for junior school and the challenges this brings.
- Parents strongly endorse the work of the kindergarten staff. Parents feel that staff are approachable and responsive. This positive partnership supports the children well through transition into the kindergarten, as well as maintaining beneficial links for assessment to inform teaching and learning.
- Safeguarding in the early years is effective, including appropriate current training for paediatric first aid and staff ratios. Adults are suitably trained and qualified to work in the early years.



## School details

Unique reference number	113562
DfE registration number	878/6001
Inspection number	10053752

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	97
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Diane Stoneman
Headteacher	Diane Stoneman
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,204–£11,490
Telephone number	01392 273387
Website	<a href="http://www.bramdeanschool.com">www.bramdeanschool.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@bramdeanschool.com">info@bramdeanschool.com</a>
Date of previous inspection	18–20 November 2015

## Information about this school

- Bramdean is a non-selective independent school in Heavitree, Exeter. Founded in 1901, it provides education for children in line with its registration for pupils between the ages of three and 18 years.
- The majority of pupils are of White British background. A very small number speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND, including those with an EHC plan, is very small.
- The school currently has no pupils who are disadvantaged (eligible for free school meals or children looked after).
- Children in the early years are taught in the kindergarten, which includes the Nursery

Year through to Year 1 pupils.

- The school has a sixth form for a few students.
- The school does not use any other alternative provision for any of its pupils. It does not usually enter pupils early for external examinations or national curriculum end-of-key-stage assessments.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils in a range of subjects in all forms (classes). In addition, inspectors looked at a broad range of pupils' work and any information held by the school about pupils' learning.
- The lead inspector also listened to some pupils from the junior school read and reviewed assessment records and home-school diaries.
- The inspectors held discussions with pupils, staff and leaders throughout the inspection, including the senior assistant headteacher, mathematics subject leader and English subject leader/SENCo.
- Inspectors also met with the headteacher, who is also the proprietor.
- The inspectors scrutinised documentation relating to safeguarding, behaviour, exclusions and attendance, which is being transferred onto an online system. School policies and documentation, including risk assessments, pupils' reviews of their EHC plans, the single central record and teachers' planning, were evaluated. In addition, the inspector reviewed the site and premises to check regulations in line with the independent school standards.
- The inspectors took account of the views of parents through checking the 11 responses to the inspection survey (Parent View) and also meeting face to face with parents at the start of the third day. Furthermore, inspectors were available to meet with parents who requested a personal or direct conversation.

## Inspection team

Stewart Gale, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Simons

Ofsted Inspector

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