

**BRAMDEAN SCHOOL  
RICHMOND LODGE  
HOMEFIELD ROAD  
HEAVITREE  
EXETER EX1 2QR**

**Reporting inspector: Simon Bennett HMI**

**Dates of inspection: 13-17 March 2000**

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### **Information about the school**

Name of the school:	Bramdean School
Type of school:	Wide age-range boarding and day school
Status:	Independent
Age-range of pupils:	3 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	Boys: 89; Girls: 69; Total: 158
Number of boarders:	Boys: 14; Girls: 5; Total: 19
Fees:	Day: £1,580 per term; Boarders: £2,450 per term
School address:	Richmond Lodge Homefield Road Heavitree Exeter EX1 2QR
Telephone number:	01392 273387
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Name of headteacher:	Miss D Stoneman
Names of proprietors:	Mr D Connett and Miss D Stoneman
DfEE number:	878/6001

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## PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE INSPECTION

1. This inspection was carried out in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Employment of the school's suitability for registration under the Education Act 1996. To this end the report concentrates on those aspects of the school relevant to that purpose, and gives detailed judgements on the core subjects of English, mathematics, science, and on music and physical education (PE).

## MAIN FINDINGS

2. Bramdean is a distinctive school with clearly defined aims and a well established ethos. It has developed steadily over the last 30 years, extending its age range, developing its site and offering co-education. It is non-selective, but offers music and other bursaries and scholarships, and has a school-financed assisted places scheme. The school provides a good education.

3. Examination results in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) are good. The average achieving five higher grades (A\*-C) at GCSE between 1997 and 1999 was 86 per cent; in 1999, it was 90 per cent. The school does not enter pupils for National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 2 or Key Stage 3, but its curriculum is broadly in line with the National Curriculum. Key Stage 3 pupils are prepared for the Common Entrance exam. Most pupils' work is presented to a high standard. The school has recently extended its provision to include a wide range of A-level courses.

4. The school's provision for children under five (the kindergarten) is of high quality. The recent Social Services report identified high quality provision and care, as did the nursery education inspection by OFSTED<sup>1</sup>. Provision for boarding is also very good.

5. Another strength of the school is the choral singing, in which standards are exceptional. The school's music curriculum is, however, much less developed.

6. Pupils show positive attitudes and behaviour in all aspects of their school life. Their relationships with each other across the age groups show respect, courtesy and a capacity to work together well.

7. There is very good practice in several subject areas, notably English, history, modern foreign languages and choral singing. Teachers' assessments of written work are good in some subjects, but the school policy on marking needs to be implemented more consistently.

8. The curriculum offered is broad and balanced. The provision of A-level courses meets the needs of the pupils. The schemes of work developed before the inspection are helpful and there is some very good practice, particularly in geography, history and religious education (RE), on which to build. The staff handbook and homework planner provide information on routines, policies and expectations in a clear and straightforward way. Staffing is generally deployed appropriately to curricular need and in providing small teaching groups.

9. There are two pupils with statements on the school's register of special educational needs. Links are maintained with outside agencies, and the school provides considerable individual support for these pupils and others with particular needs.

10. The daily act of worship is simple and reflects the ethos of the school. Relationships between staff and pupils are founded on mutual respect and are good. Support for pupils' welfare and guidance is valued, but careers guidance could be provided more systematically.

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<sup>1</sup> Available from the school and the OFSTED website ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

11. An effective homework diary ensures regular contact between home and school for the majority of pupils and is valued by parents and pupils alike. Parents also value the end-of-term reports.

12. The headteacher provides calm, approachable and sympathetic leadership.

13. Leadership and management are effective and suitable in establishing the school's ethos, which is based on Christian values and expectations of high standards of manners, behaviour and responsibility.

14. While the management of the school ensures good daily routines, some areas need strengthening, particularly the monitoring of teachers' assessments of pupils' work and the definition and development of staff responsibilities, including subject leadership. The school has grown to include provision for the under-fives and the sixth form, and this calls for a more formal management approach.

15. The school's staff are a considerable asset, and they and the school's management would benefit from greater clerical and technical support. Among other things, this would enable admission and attendance registers to be brought into line with statutory requirements, which are not currently met.

16. Resources are generally adequate and there is satisfactory provision for information and communication technology (ICT). Accommodation is generally good; it is well maintained and respected by the pupils. The chapel is an impressive building at the centre of the school. The dining hall, most classrooms, the library and the boarding area provide a good setting for their respective functions.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

17. In order to improve the quality of education further, the school should:

- introduce more systematic assessment procedures to provide greater clarity in learning objectives;
- establish more effective subject leadership and staff development procedures;
- expand clerical and technical support to relieve the pressure on senior management and teachers;
- ensure that attendance and admissions registers conform to statutory requirements.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Characteristics of the school**

18. Bramdean is an independent school, on a self-contained site in its own grounds. It has a distinctive inter-denominational ethos based on the desire to learn and to care for others. The school is non-selective and takes children from nursery to A-level. The school takes boys and girls and has a small boarding provision. There are two children with statements of special educational needs and four children with English as an additional language. The children come from a wide range of backgrounds and with a wide range of needs. The school has a strong choral tradition.

## Key indicators

### Attainment at Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	8	2	10

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	7	8	8
	Girls	2	2	2
	Total	9	10	10
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	90	100	100
	National	47.9	88.5	94

### Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	12
Good or better	54
Satisfactory or better	94
Less than satisfactory	6

### Attendance

		%
Authorised absence	School	4.4
	National comparative data	7.8
Unauthorised absence	School	0
	National comparative data	1.1



## **ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

#### **Attainment and progress**

19. The school does not select its pupils on their academic attainment.
20. There are no externally-moderated tests at the end of Key Stage 2 or 3, but the Common Entrance is used as an assessment target and indicator of progress just before entry to Key Stage 4.
21. GCSE results have improved over the last four years and are now much higher than the national average. In 1999, 90 per cent of pupils attained five or more higher grades (A\*-C) compared to an average of 86 per cent between 1997 and 1999. In 1999, a 100 per cent success rate for higher grades has been achieved in science, mathematics and English.
22. GCSE results are well above national averages in English. Attainment in English is good in all key stages.
23. Attainment in mathematics varies. At Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, it is in line with and occasionally above that expected. At Key Stage 3, pupils use mathematical language appropriately and communicate ideas effectively. At Key Stage 4, the skills of handling data are adequate and some coursework is of a high standard.
24. Attainment in science varies considerably across the three subjects. Recent GCSE results in biology reflect a range of attainment. The range of GCSE attainment in chemistry and physics is narrower but, despite the low incidence of A and A\* grades, the overall results of those entered have been significantly above the national average, with the exception of Key Stage 2 where attainment is below expectation. A majority of pupils make satisfactory or good progress across the key stages. There is, however, a need for all pupils to have more opportunities to develop skills of scientific investigation.
25. Two pupils have statements of special educational needs. A variety of other difficulties facing pupils has been identified in areas such as reading, writing and spelling, which are given particular attention by staff. The pupils concerned make satisfactory progress.

#### **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

26. Pupils show positive attitudes towards all aspects of their school life. In class, they show interest and sustain concentration, although the 35 minute lessons involve considerable movement from one place to another during the day. Pupils' capacity for personal study is illustrated by orderly groups and individuals working in the library, by the clear link between personal planners and work handed in and by the concentration displayed in class. Behaviour in and around the school is excellent. This applies to almost all classes, to mealtimes and to other aspects of the school's daily life. Relationships between pupils are constructive and courteous, as they are between pupils and teachers.
27. Pupils work very well collaboratively, for example in history, but not all subjects offer the opportunity. Respect for other people's feelings and values is strong. Pupils take an interest in each other and are happy to take responsibility. Older pupils share time with younger pupils, for example at meals, and are quick to help those in difficulty. Behaviour is mature and sensible and contributes to a positive climate for learning. One group in Key Stage 2 is rather less orderly, but the teachers are working hard to create a working environment within which these pupils can make better progress.

## **Attendance**

28. Attendance over the last year has averaged just under 96 per cent. In the month prior to the inspection it had slipped to 94 per cent mainly as a result of long-term illness. Pupils attend lessons punctually, but the short lessons frequently oblige them to walk some distance from one class to the next. Registration is conducted properly and efficiently, but the recording and collation of statistics in a helpful and centralised way are patchy. Attendance figures need to be collated on a regular basis so that an overall analysis can be made.

29. There have been no exclusions from the school in recent years.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

### **Teaching**

30. The quality of the teaching was satisfactory or better in over nine out of ten lessons seen in the inspection and was good or very good in over half the lessons.

31. The effective teaching had a number of common features. In good lessons, the work was well planned and took due note of pupils' prior learning. Regular assessment of pupils' work provided very helpful data that assisted teachers to plan future programmes. However, such information was less regularly used to influence the revision of schemes of work. In well taught lessons, teachers' expectations of pupils were appropriate; low expectations in a few lessons led to work being set that offered few challenges and set too low a work rate.

32. Teachers' subject knowledge is at least adequate and often good. In good lessons, the methods adopted were particularly conducive to effective learning. Teacher exposition was accurate and well delivered. Generally, good use was made of questioning to check what pupils knew and understood. Such questioning was particularly effective when it involved gathering responses from all pupils.

33. Relatively little use was made in the teaching seen of group or pair work. Good practice was observed in this respect in history. Though very effective when it occurred, lessons were not always brought to a close with a summary of the work covered and the new concepts introduced.

34. The majority of lessons offered pupils opportunities to assimilate their learning. In the most effective lessons, for instance in English, homework was set early in the lessons so that pupils could ensure that they clearly knew what they had to do.

35. The teaching in some lessons was adversely affected by the relatively short single lessons, where disproportionate time was lost through pupil movement.

### **The curriculum and assessment**

36. All pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum. The curriculum for the under-fives works towards the Desirable Learning Outcomes in the six areas of learning defined by the national framework. At Key Stage 1, a well written scheme of work provides an appropriate curriculum with learning objectives that are clearly identified. A similarly broad curriculum is provided at Key Stages 2 and 3. However, the curriculum is made up of 16 subjects and this results in pupils attending an unusually high number of different lessons each day.

37. At Key Stage 4, in addition to the broad and balanced core curriculum, pupils can opt for art or food technology and for a modern foreign language. Pupils are grouped by gender and this has resulted in both classes having pupils of a range of ages and attainment. The impact of the current arrangements needs to be reviewed. The classes seen were well focused; there was no perceptible difference in attitudes and behaviour of pupils in the separated teaching groups and the mixed modern foreign language lessons.

38. The provision of A-level courses meets the needs of the pupils.

39. The quality of subject schemes of work is variable. The majority of schemes show suitable progression, but not all identify key features, such as what pupils should know, understand and be able to do, appropriate teaching methods, and the teaching time required for parts of the programme.

40. Aspects of personal, social and health education are addressed through subjects such as biology and RE. The needs of the pupils should be more clearly identified so that the school can ensure that its provision is appropriate. At Key Stage 4, provision for careers education and guidance is poor. In particular, the opportunities for individual discussion of career options and routes need to be available to all pupils. The school holds occasional careers conventions and one is planned for the summer term.

41. Teachers assess pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills regularly. In the most effective lessons the teachers made such assessment through a variety of appropriate means, including discussion, marking of work and pupils sharing their work. There is whole school guidance on assessment and the marking of pupils' work which calls for the use of a standardised grading system. Although there is some inconsistency in the use of the grades, pupils are broadly aware of the standard of their work. It would be beneficial, however, if the grading of work at Key Stage 4 could be clearly linked to potential performance in GCSE examinations. Marking of pupils' work is adequate and at times very thorough and is most helpful when accompanied by advice that helps the pupils to improve their work. Teachers keep accurate records of pupils' attainment.

### **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

42. The school is successful in achieving one of its main aims, which is to maintain an ethos based on Christian values, characterised by good manners and behaviour and a strong sense of responsibility. The school, in all aspects of its life, communicates to pupils a clear message about what is right and wrong. It has much success in developing pupils' sense of responsibility towards each other, which is evident in their day-to-day behaviour and in relationships between pupils of all ages. Very good relationships in class between staff and pupils contribute significantly towards pupils' social development.

43. Consideration of moral issues was evident in a number of lessons across the curriculum, most notably, RE, English and history, although it was not consistent across all areas. A daily act of worship is conducted. In the assemblies there was a good spiritual atmosphere and prayers were linked to everyday life.

44. Through the curriculum and their involvement in the choir, pupils have good opportunities to appreciate a range of music and art forms. School visits to France and Germany support this provision.

45. Parents welcomed the opportunities for pupils to be involved in choral and other productions. A number of parents expressed the view that they would like to see a wider range of opportunities beyond the choir for all children to perform. The Christmas pageant had been much appreciated.

## **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

46. The school provides very good support for pupils and is successful in creating an environment in which they feel secure, well supported and valued. Almost all parents who returned questionnaires and attended the parents meeting endorsed this.

47. There are two pupils with statements of special educational needs. The school has established contact with the local education authority (LEA) and met with parents to discuss provision. While teaching staff are aware of these pupils' needs, the steps taken to address them are not as recommended by the national code of practice. Staff are aware of younger pupils with learning difficulties and are liaising with external agencies in relation to them.

48. Reports following recent Social Services inspection of the school's boarding provision recognise its high quality. A full-time matron provides valuable contact and counselling for pupils as well as medical advice. Pupils are confident that they are able to talk to a number of adults in the school and that teaching staff are accessible and approachable.

49. There is a designated child protection officer, although in practice the joint principals take responsibility for the role. There is no formal system for the exchange of pastoral and academic information between staff, but regular interactions ensure problems are identified and addressed promptly. The school has an anti-bullying policy in place and parents and pupils reported that it operates effectively.

50. The school encourages parental involvement in the personal and academic progress of pupils through regular, formal communication and informal contact between home and school. The majority of parents feel that they are well informed about the progress being made by their children. Reports are issued every term. The homework books are an effective means of communication between the school, pupils and parents. Overall, arrangements for reporting to parents are good. The termly record is an effective means of ensuring contact and addressing the wish expressed by several parents for more involvement in the life of the school. Parents recognise the homework planner as a very helpful means of keeping parents informed of every aspect of school life and the pupils progress including boarders all of whom return home at weekend. However, a minority requested closer monitoring of these records and a more detailed end-of-year report.

51. The school maintains individual registration details for all pupils but there is no formal admissions register that complies with statutory requirements. Daily attendance registers are kept but there are significant shortcomings in the collation of figures.

## **Partnership with parents and the community**

52. Parents expressed strong support for the aims and ethos of the school, particularly the standards of behaviour and achievement, and their children's enjoyment of school. A minority indicated a wish for stronger links with the school, but a clear majority felt that they were involved in their children's education, and supported the school's policies on communication. All parents receive regular newsletters and sign the school planners. Partnership with parents in the kindergarten is good; parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning.

53. The school has strong links with the local community, which are strengthened through the annual fête and involvement in a wide range of charity work.

## **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

### **Leadership and management**

54. The school has two proprietors, one of whom serves as headteacher and joint principal and the other as bursar and joint principal. There is no secretarial help, which puts considerable pressure on the proprietors' time.

55. The school has clearly defined aims, which are to enable students to achieve their full potential on a broad front through the development of individual skills. Along with this, is the desire to create an environment in which learning takes place in an atmosphere of mutual respect. An emphasis on politeness, social behaviour and self-discipline is central to creating such an environment.

56. The school has extended its age range over the last ten years. There is a strong commitment to the school from the proprietors who have invested much in the fabric of the buildings. The headteacher sets a strong example in terms of calmness, firmness and accessibility. The joint principal envisages a school where the chapel and the choir form a centre for excellence. To a large degree this has been realised.

57. The school runs very well on a day-to-day basis and routines are well observed by staff and pupils. However, the increase in the age range and of the classes to accommodate them means that more formal systems and procedures should now be put in place. There is now a need to develop subject management and staff development together with consistent practice across the curriculum for example on schemes of work. Teachers discuss freely issues of development and resources with the headteacher and the bursar but few long-term plans are in evidence.

58. The school needs to regularise its admissions register and the collation of attendance figures in order to meet statutory requirements.

### **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

#### **Staffing**

59. The school is well staffed. The teacher-pupil ratio is 1:7 in the main school and 1:11 in the pre-school. The school is well served by its support staff. There is no technical support for science or ICT. There are nominated first-aiders.

60. Most staff are well deployed with a good match of qualifications to the subjects they teach. The exceptions are mathematics and biology. Apart from for the under-fives all teaching is through separate subjects.

61. There is limited professional development for staff. Individual teachers identify their own staff development needs and apply for funding from the bursar. The informal procedures for staff development do not encourage the school to prioritise its in-service needs, although training for selected staff in ICT and first aid is planned. The school needs to have a clearer method of identifying requirements which should be linked to the school development plan.

62. There are no job descriptions. Induction procedures for new staff are informal. New teachers are attached to an experienced colleague for one term but some staff have made their own arrangements according to need, with some degree of success. As part of informal appraisal, the headteacher conducts classroom observation on an intermittent basis.

## **Accommodation**

63. The school is housed in and around a large town house set in its own well maintained grounds with a playing field immediately opposite and a hard play area for tennis, netball and football on leased land adjacent to the school. The school now possesses a large covered play area suitable for indoor cricket nets, football, badminton, archery, aerobics and gymnastics among other activities. Next to this is the large chapel, built in 1987, which serves as the assembly hall.

64. The premises and accommodation are generally good and have some excellent features. There is sufficient teaching space but one or two of the classrooms have limited natural light and because they are adjacent to the covered play area and metal walkways are at times noisy. Plans are in hand to address these issues. Other classrooms are very good, light, spacious and quiet. All rooms are pleasant and well decorated.

65. The nursery has pleasant rooms of good quality, but needs easier access for the very young to toilet facilities.

## **Learning resources**

66. The school has reasonable resources. The ICT provision is adequate for the current numbers in the school and is in constant use. Tape-recorders and overhead projectors are in use and there are good supplies of textbooks, but the stock of readers in the kindergarten could be refreshed. The library has a wide range of source books, videos and CDs. The chapel contains a recording studio.

## **Boarding**

67. The provision for boarding is very good. The recent Social Services report identified high quality provision and no issue of major concern. A qualified and resident matron is on duty throughout the day and resident boarding staff effectively supervise the care of boarders. Staff clearly know pupils and offer a supportive environment.

68. All boarding rooms are located in the main building and offer a good level of accommodation. Boys' and girls' bedrooms are spacious and have a good standard of decoration and presentation. Toilet and washing facilities are readily accessible and privacy is appropriately supervised by staff. There is suitable provision for both organised prep and recreational programmes. Suitable security measures are in place. Privacy and safety are priorities which are well catered for. The school has health and safety procedures which are reinforced by 24-hour care from resident staff and the matron.

# **CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

## **KINDERGARTEN AND EARLY YEARS**

### **Kindergarten**

69. There is a warm and friendly atmosphere in the kindergarten. Staff are kind and caring with children in their care. Children are encouraged to show initiative and choose their activities. They demonstrate independence, concentrate and persevere, for example, when finishing a drawing. Children are inspired to care for their environment and willingly help put toys away. Personal independence is encouraged, for example in hygiene. However, there are two heavy doors between the kindergarten and

toilet. Children are confident, and encouraged to share and take turns during activities. They learn the difference between right and wrong.

70. Staff set high standards for behaviour, to which children respond positively. Relationships are good.

71. Children achieve appropriate standards in the six areas of learning defined by the national framework. They develop good speaking and listening skills using a wide vocabulary. They learn the sounds and shapes of the alphabet and associate these sounds with rhymes and patterns in words. They develop good reading and writing skills.

72. Standards in mathematics are good. Children recognise and use numbers one to ten, sort, count, match, compare and sequence objects, make mathematical patterns and record numbers. They use practical activities to solve simple problems and gain an awareness of addition and subtraction. Some topic-based work is used to introduce geography, history and science, which would be further enhanced using the adjacent outdoor area.

73. Children have some opportunities for creative activities, but this is restricted due to lack of running water in the classroom.

74. Both members of staff, one of whom has only recently joined, are qualified and have a secure knowledge and understanding of the curriculum. They use this to provide a range of suitable activities which are appropriate for the age group.

75. One teacher has five children in her group. The other member of staff, who has been at the school for ten years has 12 children in her group. At present the groups operate independently and children only come together for games, cookery and short 'circle' times, for example, before lunch. Staff plan their sessions independently. They have their own assessment systems. They both organise their sessions well to develop children's knowledge, understanding and skills. However, at present, staff are not effectively deployed and children have limited time to interact with their peers. This lack of an integrated approach leads to repetition of some activities and limited choice of resources, shared between the two groups. A fruitful discussion with the staff resulted in a new willingness to plan jointly a more integrated day based on play activities, with staff taking responsibility for group activities.

76. There are detailed curriculum documents for the six areas of learning. Short-term plans show a range of appropriate activities suitable for the age group. However, the lack of joint planning can lead to repetition of some activities, ineffective deployment of staff and under use of resources. Boys and girls join in all activities and are treated equally by the staff. Although, at present, only girls do ballet, it is open to the boys. The teaching and planning generally meets the needs of all children, including those with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs.

### **Early Years (Key Stage 1)**

77. In Key Stage 1, good relationships between teacher and children contribute towards a friendly and purposeful atmosphere in the class. Children respond positively. They show enthusiasm and interest in their learning. Their class teacher presents lessons in a lively, challenging way. Children concentrate well for their age. They have a structured day, with several changes of staff and venue each day. Efforts must be made to ensure appropriate activities are available as children tire.

78. Children's attainment is generally good. Children achieve good standards of literacy and numeracy and in speaking and listening. In reading they use phonic skills to read unfamiliar words and

show a clear understanding of what they have read. There is a wide range of reading ability within the class and the teacher provides appropriate support for those who need it.

79. Most pupils develop good writing skills, using correct punctuation and spelling.

80. In mathematics, pupils use appropriate vocabulary confidently. They count, match, compare and sort sets of objects, have an understanding of place value and solve simple addition and subtraction problems. They gain an understanding of shape, time and money through a range of practical activities, for example finding the correct coins to buy goods.

81. In science, pupils are encouraged to find out things for themselves through simple practical activities; for example, counting their pulse rate before and after exercise. They develop their knowledge by manipulating objects and recognise how living things grow and develop. They are able to describe similarities and differences.

82. Pupils use ICT to communicate ideas and explore information. They have suitable opportunities for creative work, drama, RE and sport.

83. Children respond well to staff and behave well in lessons and around the school. They have an unusually structured timetable for children of their age, with several lessons taken by different members of staff in different venues throughout the day. The class teacher shows a secure understanding of the curriculum, with well planned lessons delivered in a lively, friendly way. The lessons are well organised with an appropriate balance between class and individual tasks.

84. The assessment of children's progress and attainment is effective, with evidence to show assessments are used to guide future planning. No standardised tests are used. Children are given short pieces of homework each day, for example, spelling. Good provision is made for children of differing attainment.

85. There are detailed curriculum documents covering literacy, numeracy, science, geography, French and biology. The curriculum is broad, balanced and meets the needs of all children. The planning shows clear progression and continuity of learning. Core subjects are taught by the class teacher. Other teachers teach games, art, RE, music, drama and history. The quality of provision is very good.

## **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

### **English**

86. Standards in English are generally good at Key Stage 1 and 2. In Key Stage 2, written work and performance in class indicate that pupils are generally achieving one level ahead of national expectations.

87. Performance at Key Stage 3 as measured by Common Entrance results gives a similar picture. Pupils have a wide range of attainment at entry and there is evidence in relation to expectations that most make very good progress. Evidence of attainment at Key Stage 4 includes a 100 per cent success rate at GCSE English and 90 per cent for literature, well above national averages.

88. The steady rise in GCSE results supplemented by evidence in books over time demonstrate confidence in areas such as writing and oral skills. This is also evident in lessons.



89. The increasing number of pupils opting for A-level English confirm the confidence pupils feel in the subject. Pupils show aptitude in sophisticated techniques and skills. Progress is evident in handwriting, in the use of vocabulary, understanding of parts of speech and in aspects of knowledge of Shakespeare's life, and writing in the context of the times in which he lived. When the plenary is used at the end of lessons, it helps to consolidate what pupils know.

90. The teaching of English seen at all key stages was never less than satisfactory and usually good or better. The teachers have knowledge and understanding of their subject evinced in an enthusiasm for historical background and content; for example, in illustrating life in Shakespeare's England. They introduce and explain topics clearly. Expectations of pupils are varied appropriately. Lessons are well planned and involve varied activities, for instance in methods of practising word and sentence work. Lessons at Key Stage 2 are impressive in this respect.

91. Pupils are well managed in all key stages. Pupils know what is expected of them and teachers combine firmness and patience. Pupils' response is very good. Where given opportunities for participation in class, pupils are very enthusiastic. When teachers build in opportunities for oral work, the pupils benefit in terms of confidence and the exploration of ideas. They are given frequent opportunities for creative writing, as evident in exercise books and displays.

92. Key Stage 2 work confirmed very good preparation. This was illustrated by one lesson with introductory work on the board, reflecting the orderly oral preface given by the teacher. The discussion which ensued on 1860s America, in the context of the writings of Laura Ingalls Wilder, led to a fruitful analysis of the text which had been read aloud. Schemes of work are in their early stages, but prepare pupils well for Common Entrance at 14 and GCSE in Key Stage 4.

93. Marking is of high quality in that it includes diagnostic and supportive comment and is clear, unambiguous, efficient and punctual. The grade system introduced across the school is being implemented in English, but there needs to be clear explanation of the letter grades to avoid confusion with GCSE attainment grades. There is good evidence of progress in specific criteria in the newly introduced text books in Key Stage 2.

94. English is well managed. Teachers in the various key stages are liaising to mutual benefit and to good effect for their pupils.

95. The accommodation is clean, light and well maintained and provides a pleasant learning environment. Resources are adequate and include audio-visual equipment and a reasonable supply of books.

## **Mathematics**

96. At Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 attainment is in line with and occasionally above that expected. Calculating skills are well rehearsed and pupils have the opportunity to hypothesise about number relationships and to test out their ideas. They express their ideas clearly in discussion and their written work.

97. At Key Stage 3, pupils use appropriate mathematical language and communicated their ideas effectively. Numerical skills are sound and pupils solve appropriately complex problems. They do not yet systematically check their work. On occasions pupils show a knowledge of mathematical processes but have yet to fully develop their understanding.

98. In the GCSE examinations in 1999, 80 per cent of pupils achieved higher grades in proportions which were much the same as in 1998. In both years no pupils achieved grade A.

99. At Key Stage 4, skills of handling data are adequate. Pupils can estimate and interpret data presented in a variety of forms. Some of the GCSE coursework is of a high standard.

100. Pupils make suitable progress across the key stages, though they need to have more opportunities to develop their investigational skills.

101. In the overwhelming majority of lessons teaching is adequate or better. The lessons are well planned and particularly effective when the objectives are made clear to the pupils. Teacher exposition is clear and well delivered. Other strategies for learning were variably used. For example, little use was made of discussion and group work.

102. Good use of questioning offered an effective way for teachers to assess what pupils knew and understood. This, in some lessons, was enhanced by teachers giving individuals very effective support when they were working on the tasks set. The single lessons make it difficult at times for teachers to provide this sort of support.

103. Pupils' work is regularly assessed by a variety of appropriate means. Teachers use such assessment to influence the planning of subsequent lessons, but it has less impact on longer-term curriculum planning. Curriculum planning across all key stages is coherent, but greater guidance is needed on effective methodology and particularly on the teaching of mathematical concepts and on the use of resources for the development of investigational skills.

104. There is no subject leader for mathematics and this has adversely impacted on discussion of curriculum planning, teaching and assessment.

## **Science**

105. Except for Key Stage 1, curricular arrangements provide for separate lessons in biology, chemistry and physics. Attainment varies both across and within the mixed age teaching groups. With the exception of pupils' investigational skills, standards achieved overall compare adequately or better with national expectations. At Key Stage 1, pupils' competence across attainment targets, including enquiry and investigation, is distinctly above average. At Key Stage 2, pupils' knowledge and skills represent less secure attainment but the ability to apply the notion of fair testing in contexts of varying complexity is evident.

106. At Key Stage 3, the range of attainment is fairly wide. Pupils' practical competence is somewhat below national expectations. The quality of recording of experimental activity is sometimes good. Towards the end of this key stage, however, pupils' overall knowledge and understanding compare favourably with national expectations, particularly in physics. At Key Stage 4, curricular options enable pupils to continue to study three science subjects and a majority do so. A significant number opt for two science subjects and the overall range of attainment is correspondingly wide.

107. Attainment in science in GCSE examination results is above average. The range of grades in biology approaches national norms and above average attainment is reflected in chemistry and physics, notably in 1998, when the proportions achieving higher grades were 90 per cent and 100 per cent respectively. The proportion of entrants achieving the highest grades across the sciences has been relatively low.

108. Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 1, but this is not fully sustained at Key Stage 2. Progress at Key Stage 3 is more favourable, but the gains achieved in the development of investigative skills are slender at Key Stage 4. This remains problematic. Gains in conceptual understanding are mostly satisfactory or good. Levels of attainment towards the end of Key Stage 4 reflect sound progress across the key stages.

109. Pupils conform to the expectations of teachers and are willing to maintain sustained efforts. Pupils' behaviour in class is very good. With the exception of one Key Stage 2 class which did not adapt satisfactorily to the environment of the laboratory, pupils co-operate very well with each other, notably when required to undertake shared practical work. Their willingness to participate in class discussion is variable.

110. The quality of teaching is usually adequate and quite frequently good. Of the three members of staff who contribute to the teaching of science in Key Stages 2, 3 and 4, all are suitably qualified and soundly committed, but none have teaching programmes exclusively dedicated to science. There is no laboratory technician and teachers are expected to organise and prepare materials for class experiments and related activities. The identification of learning objectives is not always precise. Planning does not always take sufficient account of pupils' prior attainment, nor does it generally allow for sufficient differentiation. The assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is open to significant improvement.

111. In single period lessons, a pattern of exposition followed by pupils' writing generally predominates and approaches used tend to be narrowed. The emphasis attached to experimental work and discussion is accordingly reduced. The quality of teacher exposition is generally satisfactory, accurate and well informed.

112. The day-to-day administration of each of the science subject areas is effective. Considerable scope remains for improved co-ordination of the teaching of science and the management of its provision. The three suitable, but relatively small, laboratories lack preparation room facilities. There are difficulties with the storage of materials and accessibility of equipment and resources.

## **OTHER SUBJECTS**

### **Music**

113. The founding of the chapel choir in the tradition of the English and continental cathedrals has been a distinctive undertaking in the school. The choir was founded by the present joint principal, who decided to build a chapel in the school grounds in 1987 to provide a spiritual centre for the school and a permanent base for the choir. Open voice trials are advertised for boys aged seven to ten years old.

114. Successful choristers receive substantial scholarships to provide for their all-round education in the school. The school has its own recording studio and has made a number of high quality recordings, some of which have been heard on national radio and television. A girls' choir was formed in 1996. After a fallow period, the choirs are now growing in number, the boys' choir consisting of 11 choristers, including probationers, and the girls' choir 12. Two boys with broken voices also sing lower parts in both choirs. For the rest of the school a general music curriculum is provided in kindergarten and Key Stage 1, and electronic keyboards are taught to the whole classes in Key Stage 2 and 3. During the spring term 2000, a general music curriculum was devised for Key Stage 2 comprising listening, theory and class singing.

115. The standards achieved by the boys' choir are always good and sometimes excellent. The choir works well as a unit, even though some of the individual voices are not strong. The standards achieved by the girls' choir are consistently good. The boys produce a clear and precise sound and are capable of carrying a beautiful lyrical line that grows towards the climax of the phrase and using shaded endings well to shape the close. The girls' choir is accurate in pitching notes, but the upper register often lacks clarity, and interpretation is often rather pedantic. The progress made by both choirs is good. The boys, in particular, have made very good progress since the start of the academic year, when there were only six choristers.

116. The quality of teaching in the choirs was good or better in all sessions observed. It was mainly very good and sometimes excellent. Discipline is well established and a good range of warm-up exercises is used to develop head notes and flexibility. There is a brisk pace to the rehearsals and high expectations of the pupils. Rigorous and challenging attention to detail ensures that the choir develop good musicianship. Relationships are good. The teacher is knowledgeable, provides good demonstrations of how to improve singing, and uses praise well to motivate and encourage. There are, however, rather lower expectations of the girls' choir. The pace is slower and the teaching less rigorous.

117. The curriculum for the choirs shows a strong sense of direction. Music is well chosen to meet the needs of the developing choirs, and short-term planning is very good. The carefully-planned sacred repertoire ensures that the choirs are appropriately challenged and contributes to the high standards achieved and the quality of the behaviour and response of the pupils. Long-term planning shows vision. The choirs are now condensing the amount of time required to perform new repertoire. While the choirs currently sing sacred repertoire, there are plans to develop a secular concert repertoire.

118. Informal diagnostic assessment is used well with the two choirs. There is very good support for individual pupils in recognising difficulties and providing strategies for how to improve. The recording of the choir provides good opportunities for summative assessments and benchmarking standards. After events such as evensong, there is good evaluation of the performance and detailed work, pinpointing individual mistakes in order to ensure they are not made again. Work with probationers in the choir provides further opportunities for detailed individual work to correct vocal technique.

119. Resources are very good. There are sets of anthem compilations and settings of the canticles and responses. There is also a more limited stock of secular material in sets. The chapel is a very good resource, with excellent acoustics and a recording studio fitted out to a high specification.

120. The staffing for music consists of one full-time organist and choirmaster, who also teaches curriculum music, and two part-time instrumental teachers, one for piano and another for electronic keyboard. This is adequate for the current organisation of music in the school, but does not allow for the full opportunity for all pupils in the school.

121. The leadership of the school's choral activities is effective, showing enthusiasm and a clear sense of purpose. The leadership of the curriculum music is less good, however, and there is no sense of overview or that the musical potential of all pupils in the school is being exploited. Music in the curriculum is in its early stages. The school has plans to encourage the instrumentalists to be involved in the life of the school and to develop more ensemble opportunities.

122. Attainment in music in the kindergarten and Key Stage 1 are satisfactory. In Key Stage 2, attainment is barely satisfactory and sometimes unsatisfactory. It is satisfactory or better at Key Stage 4. No lessons were observed at Key Stage 3. Where standards are consistently satisfactory in the kindergarten and Key Stage 1, pupils sing as a class to recorded accompaniments and enjoy playing a range of simple classroom instruments. They listen to folk music and are developing a musical vocabulary

to describe what they hear. In Key Stage 2, however, pupils have only developed a limited musical vocabulary to describe music heard. In class singing, higher standards are achieved by the boys. In Key Stage 4 an individual pupil achieved a good standard of score analysis and stylistic writing of Bach chorales. There have been no entries for GCSE music for the last few years and, this year, the two GCSE pupils will not be entered for the examination.

123. The quality of teaching in the music curriculum varies from satisfactory to unsatisfactory. Where the teaching is satisfactory, pupils are appropriately challenged, for example, in a Key Stage 2 class where pupils were encouraged to invent their own graphic notation to represent an eight-beat sequence containing pulse notes and rests. At Key Stage 4, an individual pupil was well challenged to analyse music from a Bach score. The teachers have good subject knowledge and the lessons are planned with a range of activities, for example in the kindergarten and Key Stage 1 where pupils were listening to music, singing and performing with instruments. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, especially at Key Stage 2, discipline is not well maintained and the pace of lessons is slow. Learning objectives for the lessons are not clear and a series of unrelated activities do not develop subject knowledge or understanding. No use is made of targeted questioning, especially in Key Stage 4, where long periods of time are spent on one activity. The quality of teaching by visiting piano and keyboard teachers is inconsistent; there is some very good individual tuition but also some whole group tuition at Key Stage 2 that is less satisfactory.

124. The music curriculum is unsatisfactory and does not fully take account of continuity and progression of musical skills or vocabulary. Key Stage 2 and 3 pupils receive a weekly electronic keyboard lesson delivered to the whole class, with individuals using headphones. Additionally, Key Stage 2 pupils receive a curriculum music lesson. The scheme of work, introduced this term for the first time, is narrow in its range of musical experiences and does not place sufficient emphasis on the music of different cultures or on the more creative aspects of the curriculum. The provision is constrained by the lack of classroom percussion instruments and limited use of ICT. In the early years a published music scheme is used and staff adapt the scheme well to meet the needs of the pupils. Curriculum delivery is at the moment content-based and there are limited opportunities for the 109 keyboard players in Key Stage 2 and 3 to demonstrate their skills. No use is made of the 59 pupils who receive instrumental tuition outside school.

125. Assessment within the curriculum music lessons is poor; as yet, there are no assessment procedures and no formalised reporting to parents on pupils' progress. The pupils do not have exercise books. Within keyboard lessons, pupils progress through a series of pieces of music of increasing difficulty, but many regress to easier pieces when they cannot manage the work set.

126. In order to improve provision, the school should raise the profile of music in the curriculum to make it accessible to all pupils and to encourage their musical interests. The school should develop the resources for music in the curriculum to include a range of classroom melodic and percussion instruments, secular singing resources, a wider listening repertoire and computers with appropriate software. The school should formulate a scheme of work to ensure that there is continuity and progression of musical skills and vocabulary from kindergarten to Year 9.

## **PE and games**

127. Standards of performance skills are generally in line with national expectations across key stages. At the end of each key stage, pupils have a good understanding of appropriate warm-up routines before physical activity and the benefits of exercise. In games, most pupils are knowledgeable about rules and are able to perform basic skills, such as sending and receiving, striking and travelling with a ball in different games. However, pupils' ability to apply these skills accurately in a game situation is less secure. There are few opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their planning and evaluation skills.

128. In the sessions seen, all Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils were able to sustain energetic activity over appropriate periods of time and perform simple skills safely, in sequence and with increasing control. At Key Stage 3 a group of Year 8 pupils showed good levels of performance above national standards in swimming. They were confident in the water and able to perform at least two strokes and personal survival skills with precision. At Key Stage 4 a small group of pupils using the multi-gym showed an understanding of safe training procedures using graduated weights and repetition exercises.

129. A-level provision is new and students are making good progress in practical aspects. Limited evidence was available of the theoretical elements.

130. Pupils in the school cricket and netball representative teams demonstrated good standards of performance. In a variety of sports a small number of pupils are achieving high standards of performance and gaining representative honours outside the school.

131. Pupils' progress is satisfactory overall and good at Key Stage 1 and A-level. However, the organisation of classes across different key stages and a three-weekly rota for swimming make continuity more difficult to achieve.

132. Pupils' attitudes to learning and standards of behaviour are good. They settle quickly to work and participate enthusiastically. When given the opportunities to work in groups, for example, in Key Stage 2 and 3 netball and in Key Stage 4 football, pupils worked well together. Relationships between staff and students are very good. PE contributes effectively to the moral and social development of pupils through the principles of fair play and codes of conduct.

133. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory and sometimes good. Where teaching was good, for instance Key Stage 3 swimming and Key Stage 4 football, planning involved pupils in a variety of tasks and subject knowledge was used effectively to extend pupils and improve performance. Additional good features included attention to warm-up and aspects of safety, high expectations of behaviour and a good pace of working.

134. Most teaching seen was whole class. There is scope for offering more differentiated work within classes to match more closely pupils' needs. More opportunities for group work enabling pupils to plan their own activities and evaluate their performance would also be helpful. Good examples of this were seen at A-level, where students were encouraged to evaluate performance and to develop leadership skills, and in Key Stage 2 netball where pupils began to put basic skills into small game situations. Learning objectives identified in boys' and girls' schemes of work could be used more effectively in lessons.

135. At Key Stage 1 and 2, pupils are offered a broad programme of activities, including games, swimming, athletics, aspects of gymnastics and health-related exercise. Provision narrows slightly at Key Stages 3 and 4, where there is an increased emphasis on games. The curriculum time allocated to PE is good, although the timetable arrangements and organisation of teaching groups do not always facilitate effective use of time. Pupils' attainment and progress are reported annually to parents, and staff are beginning to develop new methods of recording assessment data.

136. The scheme of work provides a useful overview of the objectives and content of different activity areas. This could be developed into smaller, progressive units of work based on specific learning objectives linked with assessment criteria for year groups. Planning in games focuses on good opportunities to consolidate techniques and skills, but insufficient emphasis is placed on strategies and tactics and the application of skills in a game situation. There is currently no provision for the teaching of A-level theory work.

137. There are good opportunities for both competitive and recreational extra-curricular activities, with good quality coaching in areas such as cricket, netball and archery. Parents and pupils support this provision.

138. Accommodation for the subject is good. An indoor area is used for a variety of activities, and there is a small multi-gym and outside playing fields. The school makes effective use of local facilities for both games and swimming. Changing facilities are adequate. Resources are good for Key Stage 3 and 4 activities but the variety of equipment available to younger pupils could be expanded. The development of gymnastics equipment is a positive move that will help broaden curriculum opportunities further.

139. Staff are appropriately qualified and offer substantial and complementary experience in specific areas, such as high-level cricket coaching. Both teachers are relatively new to the school and have made good progress in raising the profile of PE. Day-to-day management is good. Risk assessment guidance is available and this should be extended to cover all aspects of the department's work, including the management of off-site activity. The director of PE has a vision for the future development of PE and sport. It would be helpful to formulate this into a development plan that identifies priorities and sets targets.

## **INSPECTION DATA**

### **Summary of inspection evidence**

140. Six of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) inspected Bramdean over a period of four days. They attended 82 lessons, conducted over 30 interviews and meetings with proprietors and staff, both formal and informal, held a meeting with parents, scrutinised work at all key stages and ranges of ability, conducted meetings with pupils of every age group and inspected the boarding provision. HMI also studied a wide range of documentation.

## Data and indicators

### Pupil data

NC Year Group	School's descriptor	Boys	Girls	Total
N	KG	1	1	2
R	KG	6	3	9
1	EY	2	2	4
2	2	3	7	10
3	3B	5	8	13
4	3A	3	5	8
5	4B	3	6	9
6	4A	5	5	10
7	5B	5	15	20
8	5A	3	11	14
9	Remove	10	6	16
10	M6	2	5	7
11	M6	15	7	22
12	6	3	5	8
13	6	4	2	6
<b>TOTAL</b>		70	88	158

Number of pupils with English as an additional language	Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs
4	2

### Teachers

Number of teachers	Full-time		Part-time	
Total: 19	Female: 5	Male: 5	Female: 7	Male: 2



**Public funding**

	Number of pupils	Approximate amount (£)
Nursery	7	£7,665

## PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	128
Number of questionnaires returned:	58
Percentage return rate:	45

### Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	24	48	7	12	9
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	67	23	4	6	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	48	31	10	11	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	35	44	12	9	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	53	35	8	4	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	61	36	2	1	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	52	38	8	2	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	50	36	10	2	2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	70	24	4	2	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	76	20	4	0	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	84	10	2	4	0