



Bramdean School

Independent School

Inspection report

**Better
education
and care**

DfES Registration Number 878/6001
Unique Reference Number 113562
Inspection number 296785
Inspection dates 9 – 10 January 2007
Reporting inspector Mr Peter Way HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

Age group 3-18	Published 02 February 2007	Reference no. 296785
-------------------	-------------------------------	-------------------------

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Bramdean School is a non-selective independent school for pupils aged from 3 to 18 years. It was established in Exeter in 1901 and is situated in a residential area. The school places a high emphasis on family values and the role of parents in their children's education. It aims to give pupils *'a well-rounded education where teamwork, co-operation, self-discipline and good manners are observed alongside the teaching of academic subjects by highly qualified staff.'* The school was last inspected in 2000.

Evaluation of the school

Bramdean School is a highly successful, harmonious school where the pupils are well-mannered, happy and achieve very high standards. Academic attainment is excellent and there are very good opportunities for the development of sporting, artistic and musical talents. The school has a good range of specialist teaching areas and a well-qualified staff who enable pupils to make good progress. The strong family atmosphere contributes to the pupils' sense of belonging and the good level of care which they are shown. The school is very well led and managed which ensures that the quality of education is good. The school meets virtually all of the regulations for registration and is attending to two minor issues.

Quality of education

The school offers a good curriculum which is well planned and ensures that due emphasis is given to academic, sporting and creative opportunities. It includes all subjects appropriate to the needs of each age group of pupils. From an early age, pupils benefit from studying a wide range of subjects in depth and from specialist teaching which continues through to the sixth form.

A good range of activities is provided for pupils in the Kindergarten. These activities are closely matched to the national guidance on areas of learning for young children and allow for a good balance of both adult-directed and independent learning. Daily emphasis is given to the teaching of skills in reading, writing and number. The classroom environment is stimulating and

pupils develop very good social skills and confidence due to the good pastoral care and encouragement they receive.

Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills continue to be developed well as they progress through the junior and senior departments. Subject schemes of work ensure that the learning experiences for each year group build systematically upon prior learning. An appropriate range of subjects is offered to pupils for the GCSE course and all are able to undertake work experience. The more limited range of subjects available at advanced level is offset by the very small teaching group sizes. The range of curriculum opportunities made available is much appreciated by the pupils throughout the school. Their enjoyment is enhanced by the specialist resources available and the many opportunities for extra-curricular studies, such as the school's recent production of *'The Adventures of Tom Sawyer'* and pupils' involvement in the Devon Performing Arts Festival. Personal development is promoted through various subjects although there is no clearly defined personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Careers education and advice is available to pupils from Year 7 onwards.

The general standard of teaching throughout the school is good and often excellent. Teachers have high expectations and pupils make good progress as a result. Lessons are usually well prepared and the key points which pupils are expected to learn are frequently shared with them at the start of the session. Pupils are encouraged to apply intellectual and creative effort to their work and good use is made of time in lessons. Because the classes are small the teachers know the pupils well and give good individual support. Pupils who need additional guidance are also well looked after and a particular strength of the school is the encouragement, support and confidence which is provided to enable all pupils to achieve their best.

There is a strong emphasis on high standards of work and presentation and the pupils respond well to this. Teachers are well qualified in their subjects and this contributes to the high academic, sporting and creative achievements of the pupils. Teachers and pupils show respect for each other and these good relationships are an integral part of the school's family ethos. Records of progress and achievement are kept by the teachers and these are used to ensure that work is closely matched to the pupils' learning needs. Books are marked regularly and conscientiously. Although pupils are given good guidance orally, there is not enough written feedback in books to exemplify subject-related points for improvement. The school's results in GCSE and A level examinations are impressive and underline the high quality of teaching and learning across the school. Department for Education and Skills (DfES) published tables for school comparison show that 100% of pupils achieved 5 A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, in the 2006 GCSE exams.

Parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire are overwhelmingly positive about the quality of education, and several commented additionally on the school's success at significantly improving their children's confidence and life-chances.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Throughout the school, behaviour is outstanding. Pupils from across the age range mix very harmoniously. The school helps pupils to develop as confident, considerate and highly articulate young people, who are polite, friendly to visitors, and very supportive of one another. Teachers are successful in fostering pupils' personal development and their enjoyment of school. As a result, pupils' attitudes to learning and to life are very positive.

Pupils understand their responsibilities to others and to the broader community, to which they make a good contribution. Their preparation for adulthood is reinforced appropriately through activities such as the outdoor leadership development programmes, which include the opportunity to participate in the Ten Tors challenge and Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Although the school has tried a number of ways of listening to pupils' opinions, many pupils commented on their pre-inspection questionnaire that they do not feel sufficiently involved in decision-making at the school.

A daily act of worship is held in the chapel giving pupils an opportunity to sing, pray and reflect. Cultural development and awareness of the wider world is well nurtured through curricular studies. For example, in religious studies, younger pupils study aspects of global faiths and in drama, older students study the conventions of eastern as well as western theatrical forms. Visits to museums, places of worship and businesses enhance their appreciation of the wider community, strengthen cultural understanding and enhance economic awareness.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school takes good care of the pupils at all times. Due attention is given to all regulations and legislation to ensure that the school is following the prescribed guidance. Some procedures are currently being updated with the 2007 guidance which came into force one week before this inspection. There is a very clear handbook for staff which contains details of all the relevant policies and procedures. Proper attention has been given to supervision, child protection, fire safety and First Aid. Pupils say they feel safe at the school and there are no serious incidents of bullying because of the family ethos. The curriculum highlights aspects of healthy lifestyles and pupils know how to make

sensible choices. The site has many steps and access for people with certain disabilities is difficult but the school complies with all statutory duties.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Appropriate checks are made on all staff before appointment to employment and accurate records are kept. The school complies with the required procedures for ensuring that current guidelines are followed.

School's premises and accommodation

The school occupies extensive buildings which provide a good range of specialist and general accommodation. The classrooms are well maintained and equipped with suitable furnishings and resources. The science laboratories are very well equipped. Art, music, drama and information and communication technology have designated rooms. There is a school library, a sports field and a good-sized covered sports facility which is marked out for various games. This area is also used during break-times. The large school chapel is used each morning for assembly and other school events. The boarding accommodation meets all requirements, but there were no boarders at the time of the inspection.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The quality of information to parents and prospective parents is generally good and is usefully supplemented by an attractive website and well-produced termly newsletters. These give a very good flavour of the range of curriculum enrichment activities in which pupils are engaged, and of the general life of the school. Reports to parents are of good quality and identify clearly the progress that their children have made, although a few parents would like even more information. The school does not yet make it clear to parents that a range of school policies is available for them to peruse.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has recently rewritten the complaints procedure to ensure that it meets all regulations. Most parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with problems but some are unaware of the formal complaints procedure.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- incorporate guidelines from the new Department for Education and Skills (DfES) guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education (2007)* (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- ensure that parents, carers and others are aware that they can request various policies from the school (paragraph 6(2)(h)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- provide more written feedback to pupils showing how to improve their work.
- define clearly and separately the school's PSHE programme by bringing together the several strands which are taught through various subjects.

School details

Name of school	Bramdean School		
DfES number	878/6001		
Unique reference number	113562		
Type of school	Preparatory and Senior Day and Boarding School		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1901		
Age range of pupils	3-18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 107	Girls: 47	Total: 154
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 3	Girls: 1	Total: 4
Number of boarders	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,285 - £7,497		
Annual fees (boarders)	£10,662		
Address of school	Richmond Lodge Homefield Road Heavitree Exeter Devon EX1 2QR		
Telephone number	01392 273387		
Fax number	01392 439330		
Email address	info@bramdeanschool.com		
Joint Headteachers	Miss D. Stoneman/Mr D.A. Connett		
Proprietor	Miss Diane Stoneman		
Reporting inspector	Mr Peter Way HMI		
Dates of inspection	9 – 10 January 2007		