

Bradon Forest School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126503
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	328510
Inspection dates	5–6 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Christopher Russell HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1190
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Procter
Headteacher	Leonard Spiers
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2006
School address	The Peak Purton Swindon SN5 4AT
Telephone number	01793 770570
Fax number	01793 771063

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large school is situated in North Wiltshire; most students live in the surrounding villages or in Swindon. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly below the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is low. The school was designated as a specialist arts college in 2005.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Bradon Forest School is providing a satisfactory standard of education. A number of aspects of the school's work are good. The school is very popular with parents: a large number responded to the inspection questionnaire and all but a few were positive about the school. The school is also popular with students: their attendance is good and they enjoy school. Students are very well cared for. They feel safe, happy and well supported. Their personal development and well-being are good. While behaviour was good at the time of the last inspection, low-level misbehaviour was identified as a problem in some lessons. The school has successfully focused on this area and, while there is still minor disruption in a few lessons, the problem has reduced significantly. The way in which the school monitors students' academic progress was also identified as a key area for improvement at the last inspection. A comprehensive system is now in place to set targets for students and to check their progress. This is helping leaders to hold staff more to account for students' achievement. However, teachers are not yet making sufficient use of the information that the system provides when they plan and deliver their lessons. Students make satisfactory progress; at the time of the last inspection they were making good progress. The main thing preventing greater progress is the variable quality of teaching and learning. Lessons are often good and are sometimes excellent; they have many strengths, most notably the very good relationships between teachers and students, and teachers' strong subject knowledge. However, there are also some important weaknesses, even in many of the good lessons. In particular, too many lessons are heavily directed by the teacher: there are too few opportunities for students to become actively involved in the lesson, or to work on their own or with other students. Also, work in lessons is often insufficiently varied to meet the needs and abilities of individual students. The school provides a good curriculum. There have been a number of developments since the last inspection. These include the ICT-based 'learning platform', which is popular with students and already well embedded in the school's work, and the new learning skills course in Year 7, which has been well planned and is already helping students to become better learners. The range of vocational courses available to students in Years 10 and 11 is also expanding. While satisfactory overall, the school's leadership and management have many important strengths. Leaders have successfully maintained, and indeed improved, the quality of care, guidance and support that the school provides. Students' personal development and well-being remain strong and the curriculum is developing well. The school's specialist status has made a positive contribution to its work and supports strong links with the community and other local schools. Leaders have made significant progress in dealing with the areas for improvement that were raised at the last inspection. They have been less successful at maintaining the good standard of teaching and learning; consequently, students are not achieving as much as they were at the time of the last inspection. While procedures for monitoring and developing teaching and learning are in place, judgements about quality are sometimes a little generous. The extent of lesson monitoring is also rather limited, and the role of middle leaders in the process is underdeveloped.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that lessons enable students to become more fully involved in their learning and have more opportunities to work independently and collaboratively.
- Use information about students' targets and achievement when planning lessons to ensure that work is more closely matched to the needs of individual students.
- Ensure that leaders across the school rigorously monitor and develop the quality

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students generally enter the school with standards that are slightly above national averages, although there is some variation between year groups. They make satisfactory progress, maintaining standards that are slightly above average in both key stages. GCSE and national Key Stage 3 test results were slightly above average in 2007. These students made satisfactory progress given their starting points and capabilities. Initial analysis of the unvalidated 2008 GCSE results indicates that standards fell slightly, but that students made similar progress to those taking examinations in 2007. Almost all students gain five or more GCSE passes at grade C or above. Standards in the specialist subjects are high.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and is well supported by the school's extensive cultural links and opportunities; students' spiritual development is particularly strong. Students are helped to live safe and healthy lifestyles and are prepared well for the future. A high proportion of Year 11 students move into education, training or employment when they leave. Students make a very good contribution to the school and local community. They undertake a wide range of responsibilities, for example as ICT ambassadors, prefects and peer mentors. Students are able to influence the school's direction and development; recent change to the school day, for example, followed suggestions from the school council.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school has some very good teachers, and teaching across the school has many strengths. Lessons are orderly and well managed. Teachers generally make good use of questioning. In the best lessons, starter activities are used well to engage students' interest. However, too many lessons have insufficient variety and do not meet the needs of individual students sufficiently closely. In many, students are not clear enough about what they are trying to achieve and their learning is not checked and consolidated sufficiently by the teacher. Students' work is well marked in some subject areas, but there are inconsistencies in the quality and usefulness of the feedback that students receive about their work

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is developing well. Leaders are working hard to ensure that it matches students' needs and interests as closely as possible. Very strong links with another local school allow students in Years 10 and 11 access to high quality Level 1 vocational qualifications in an expanding range of subjects; opportunities to study Level 2 vocational qualifications are more limited. The 'learning platform' has made a strong contribution to the development of the curriculum: it enables students to access homework, parents to access information such as coursework titles, and primary school pupils to take part in a range of activities before they transfer. A number of personalised programmes are in place for students with complex needs.

Extra-curricular provision is good and students enjoy the opportunities on offer. The arts specialism has made a significant contribution to the curriculum in a range of areas.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Strong systems are in place to care for and support students. Arrangements for safeguarding and child protection are robust and regularly reviewed. Students who require additional help, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language, are very well supported. A particular strength is the way in which the school supports students' transition when they join in Year 7 and when they leave at the end of Year 11. Students act as 'progression ambassadors' and are very effective in supporting and guiding their peers in their choices at various stages of school. Processes for tracking and monitoring students' progress have developed well since the last inspection. The recently initiated student review days ensure that students are clearer about their current achievement and what they need to do to improve. However, teachers are not yet making sufficient use of information about students' targets and achievement when they plan lessons and assess students' work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leaders have strengthened the systems that enable them to evaluate the school's performance and plan for the future. Monitoring, evaluation and planning across the school are now more coordinated. However, while the new systems themselves are good, they are insufficiently focused on evaluating and improving the quality of teaching, learning and achievement. The much improved systems for tracking and monitoring progress are helping leaders to set challenging targets and to check whether subject areas are meeting these targets, although these systems are not yet used fully to analyse performance at year and group level. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion; in particular, there are strong local, regional and international links. Governors are committed and supportive. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

8 November 2008 Dear Students Inspection of Bradon Forest School, Purton, SN5 4AT Thank you for your help and for taking the time to talk to us during the recent inspection. I am writing to you to tell you about our main findings. We found that your school is satisfactory overall, and that it has some good features. Staff care for you and support you very well. You clearly enjoy school and your attendance is good. We were impressed by your contribution to the school and wider community; you have many very good opportunities. The way in which the school tracks and monitors your progress has improved since the last inspection. The school has also worked to reduce the number of lessons that are disrupted by minor misbehaviour. While a few lessons are still disrupted, this is now quite rare. The curriculum is developing well and the 'learning platform' is clearly a very helpful development. We saw many good and outstanding lessons, but also quite a few that were satisfactory. Many lessons were very directed by the teacher, meaning that you spent a lot of time listening, with limited opportunities to get more involved in your learning. Many lessons are also not varied enough to closely match your individual needs. We think that making all lessons as good as the best is the main thing for the school to concentrate on now. Your school's leaders are committed to making further improvements. The inspection team wish you well for the future. Yours sincerely Chris Russell
Her Majesty's Inspector