

Bramdean School

Independent school inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Jonathan Palk HMI

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002¹, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

This was a light touch inspection which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils; and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Bramdean School is a non-selective independent school for pupils aged from 3 to 18 years. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are provided for in the kindergarten class. The school was established in Exeter in 1901. It places a high emphasis on family values and the role of parents in their children's education, and aims to give pupils 'a well-rounded education where teamwork, cooperation, self-discipline and good manners are observed alongside the teaching of academic subjects by highly qualified staff'. The school was last inspected in January 2007. The most recent report on the provision for children aged three to five years was published in May 2008.

Evaluation of the school

Bramdean successfully meets its stated aims and provides a good quality education for its pupils. There are excellent aspects to the school's work. All pupils make good progress and reach high standards because the teaching is consistently good and the pupils have very positive attitudes towards learning. The good curriculum has some outstanding features and this underpins pupils' excellent personal development and sense of well-being. The school has made satisfactory progress since its last inspection, with some good improvement made to the outside provision for the youngest children. However, the school still does not fully meet the regulations relating to safeguarding arrangements and consequently the provision for care and welfare is satisfactory.

Quality of education

The school provides a good curriculum for all pupils, including those in the kindergarten which enables them to develop as well-rounded individuals. The use of bursaries to attract and develop talented young people in aesthetic areas such as

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

singing, drama and art has a significant impact on the high expectations of all pupils. The provision of an impressive range of sporting opportunities for a school of this size is commendable and makes a highly valued contribution to pupils' development of healthy lifestyles. A wide variety of excursions and visitors helps to broaden pupils' experiences and supports their learning well. The school adjusts its programme of subjects for GCSE in line with the requirements and aspirations of individual pupils, so ensuring that the older pupils develop a mature attitude to their futures. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to experience working with practical applications in the area of design and technology. The school recognises this and is reviewing its options in order to broaden pupils' experiences.

Teaching is good across the school, including in the kindergarten, with some outstanding practice that leads to good rates of progress. The specialist knowledge of teachers is used effectively to match work to individual needs and to pace the learning so that pupils of different abilities learn well. There is increasing use of new technologies to hold pupils' attention and revisit earlier learning efficiently. However, there are insufficient opportunities for small group working to capitalise on pupils' admirable collaborative skills. Where teaching is especially good, there is first-rate planning, challenging pace to the lesson and some incisive questioning that probes pupils' learning and challenges their thinking. This quality of questioning is not consistent and in some lessons opportunities are missed to engage pupils in thinking more deeply. Teachers make the most of the opportunities with small class sizes to give plenty of individual support. Pupils report that they appreciate the regular guidance on how they can improve their work and achieve their targets. A key element of this guidance is the informative marking of pupils' work, which has improved since the last inspection.

The school is effective in accumulating assessment and test information about the attainment of pupils through a range of tests, including standardised tests, in each year group on a regular basis. Teachers supplement this with regular 'progress meetings' with the headteacher that ensure the efficient tracking of rates of progress and speedy implementation of additional support for those who may be falling behind. Pupils' progress over their time in the school is good, some from lower starting points making excellent gains. Those pupils who choose to stay on into the sixth form gain the necessary qualifications for a place at the university of their choice.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Those joining the school with lower levels of confidence and self-esteem rapidly improve within the harmonious climate the school promotes. This is recognised in parents' comments to inspectors. From an early age, all pupils report that they enjoy their school life and their high attendance reflects this. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning. Work is well presented and there are many bright and interesting displays around the

school which exemplify pupils' good presentation in writing, art and science. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Their keenness and enthusiasm in lessons is genuine. They are extremely polite and in some lessons ask good questions. Pupils' development of their skills and knowledge in literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology, and interpersonal skills is above average. As a result, they are well prepared for their future economic well-being.

The school has sustained the strengths noted in the last report in developing pupils' contributions to the school and the community at large through fund raising, performing plays and singing in the highly respected choir. There are few opportunities other than sporting events for them to work alongside pupils of a similar age through, for example, partnerships with other local schools. However, there are well established links with a Sri Lankan school and this, combined with an annual visit to Barcelona, provides pupils with a good insight into some other cultures. The school celebrates a range of religious festivals during the year and pupils say that they value the presence of those from different parts of the world. This facilitates pupils' openness to new ideas, their appreciation of cultural diversity and their readiness to challenge racism.

Pupils enjoy their responsibilities around school and, although there is no formal platform for them to share their views on how the school could improve, they consider that their views are known and responded to by the proprietors.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

This aspect of the school's work is satisfactory. The proprietors acknowledge that they have not kept up to date with current requirements to safeguard children. The child protection policy does not make sufficient reference to current guidelines. The training for the designated person is out of date and formal training for the rest of the staff has not been undertaken. Action was being taken to address this failing prior to the inspection and appropriate training has been arranged early in November.

The school cares well for all its pupils. Pupils report that they feel safe and there are always members of staff they can go to if they have worries or concerns. They say that they like coming to a small school where everybody knows them well. Parents agree and appreciate the family atmosphere. A few commented that the mixed age and ability classes have had a positive impact on their children's confidence. The school has a satisfactory plan to improve access as required by the Disability Discrimination Act. Suitable risk assessments are in place, including those for fire precautions and activities out of school. Pupils respond well to high expectations on them to move around the numerous stairways and corridors safely.

The school has improved its systems for informing parents, carers and others about its policies and these now meet all the requirements. The admission and attendance registers meet the regulations. Criminal Records Bureau checks have been made on

all staff and there is a written policy for the recruitment of staff. There is a clear policy for first aid which is implemented effectively and staff have received appropriate training. The school places an excellent focus on healthy lifestyles and students eat healthily. They take regular exercise and have a good programme of lessons with specialist teachers for physical education.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage receive a high level of adult attention and this promotes their progress well. Standards on entry reflect the full ability range, although for most children these are slightly above average. As a result of consistently good teaching, underpinned by significant recent improvements in planning and assessment, children make good progress across all areas of learning. From the evidence available, the majority are working at levels above those expected by the time they leave kindergarten at age five. The youngest children are cared for well and staff demonstrate a good understanding of their personal and developmental needs. It is evident, even at this early stage of the school year, that teaching is particularly effective in developing children's social and language skills. The planned support for language and communication skills, including the development of children's phonic awareness, has positive benefits for children's learning.

Positive relationships, the engagement with parents and the commitment to children's enjoyment, staying safe and healthy eating are all significant strengths in the care and welfare of children. The curriculum is good overall. Learning activities are well planned and often stimulating and are matched well to the needs of the children. Children have regular opportunities to make choices and develop independence in their learning. The school has made significant progress recently in developing facilities to support children's outdoor learning. However, these opportunities are not yet fully integrated into the curriculum because there is not easy access to the new outdoor area. The school recognises that further modifications are required to the building for this to happen.

The school has successfully developed a thorough and cohesive assessment system which has the potential to provide an overview of the progress which children make across the areas of learning. However, the school is not yet using available information to demonstrate the extent of the progress which children make. Leadership and management are good and the school's managers have successfully introduced detailed developmental records which have had a beneficial impact on children's learning.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

- prepare and implement a revised policy to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school, and undertake the required level of training for the designated person for child protection and for all other staff in compliance with DCSF guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education* (2007) (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

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:

- extend the strongest elements of teaching and learning by using more probing questions to challenge pupils' understanding and raise their expectations in lessons
- provide more opportunities for pupils to develop designing and making skills
- continue with plans to provide easier access for the children in the kindergarten to the purpose-built outdoor area.

Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		√		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		√		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		√		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		√		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	√			
The behaviour of pupils	√			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils			√	
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How good are the outcomes for children in the EYFS?		√		
What is the quality of provision in the EYFS?		√		
How effectively is the EYFS led and managed?		√		
Overall effectiveness: how well does the school meet the needs of children in the EYFS?		√		

School details

Name of school	Bramdean School		
DCSF number	878/6001		
Unique reference number	113562		
Type of school	Preparatory and Senior Day School		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1901		
Age range of pupils	3–18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 80	Girls: 47	Total: 127
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 2	Girls: 3	Total: 5
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,070-£8,691		
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		
Headteacher	Miss Diane Stoneman		
Proprietor	Miss Diane Stoneman		
Reporting inspector	Jonathan Palk HMI		
Dates of inspection	15 October 2009		