

Brymore School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	123903
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	380764
Inspection dates	13–14 March 2012
Lead inspector	Robert Pyner HMI

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

Type of school	Technical
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	13–17
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	150
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	7
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara Drakeford
Headteacher	Mark Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	19–20 March 2009
School address	Cannington Bridgwater TA5 2NB
Telephone number	01278 652369
Fax number	01278 653244
Email address	office@brymore.somerset.sch.uk

Age group	13–17
Inspection date(s)	13–14 March 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Robert Pyner

Her Majesty's Inspector

Helen Matthews

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited 17 lessons or activities amounting to approximately nine hours of direct observations. These included two joint observations, one with the headteacher and the other with the deputy headteacher; in all, 14 teachers were observed. Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Chair of the Board of Trustees, staff and students. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at progress tracking and performance data, the school strategic plan, students' work and numerous policies, guidelines, plans and reviews. An inspector heard some Year 10 students read. The questionnaire responses from 37 parents and carers, 117 students and 33 staff were also analysed. The inspection did not include boarding provision.

Information about the school

Brymore is a maintained boarding school for boys aged 13–17 years, which is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school. Boys attend from across Britain and overseas with nearly three quarters being boarders. The school specialises in rural technology and has a farm, garden and workshops. Almost all students are White British and the proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is well above the national average; needs include specific learning and behaviour, emotional and social difficulties. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs or with specific provision is also above the national figure. A significant proportion of students join or leave the school other than at the usual times. The school has been supported under the National Challenge programme and by the local authority following a safeguarding review in 2010. A board of trustees currently works with the governing body. In 2011, the school did not meet the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. There has been considerable change in senior leadership and governance since the last inspection, with the headteacher, following a period in an acting capacity, appointed to the permanent post in September 2011. At the same time, the deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers were appointed. The few Year 12 students attend courses at the local further education college.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Since his appointment, the headteacher has driven improvements across the range of provision with determination and resilience. The appointment of a new senior leadership team has reinforced improvements resulting in a positive impact on achievement. Students, parents, carers and staff recognise and appreciate the improvements made but outcomes are not strong enough for the school to be judged as good overall.
- Attainment in English and mathematics is low but the latest assessment tracking data show that the gaps with national figures are closing. Outcomes in design and technology, agriculture and horticulture are strong, and during observations particularly effective learning was observed in practical sessions. School data show improving achievement by students across subjects but with, correctly, an increased focus on literacy and numeracy skills. Staff recognise the need to build on improvements with continued focused support to ensure students make more progress. Additionally, although there is evidence of effective writing in English, this is not firmly established in other subjects.
- The focus on teaching within the school has led to the improvements seen in achievement. However, good teaching is not consistent across the school. In particular, lessons do not always provide clearly focused activities which challenge ability groups. Additionally, in class-based lessons, students are not given sufficient opportunities to apply their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Students, parents and carers, and staff are positive about procedures to keep students safe. The introduction of a new behaviour policy is welcomed by students but this has led to an increased number of exclusions. Attendance rates are improving.
- The headteacher has developed a strong focus on the improvement of teaching through performance management procedures. At a time of significant change, the governing body and board of trustees have supported the school well. However, more streamlined governance is necessary to support the school efficiently in meeting its strategic aims. The provision for the very small number of sixth form students is satisfactory and based at the local further education

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college.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress in English and mathematics so that by summer 2012 and summer 2013 the school meets its challenging targets by:
 - ensuring that assessment tracking develops the intervention and support strategies further so that all students make at least expected progress
 - developing a consistent approach to teachers' expectations and strategies to ensure high quality writing across curriculum subjects.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that by summer 2013 monitoring shows at least 80% is consistently good or better by:
 - developing the systematic monitoring of and support for teachers with a sharper focus on the progress made by students
 - ensuring more focused activities in lessons which challenge the specific needs of different ability groups, particularly the more-able
 - in class lessons, developing more activities which require students to apply their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Develop more streamlined systems for the governing body and board of trustees to work together in meeting the strategic aims of the school and hold senior leaders to account for students' outcomes.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Evidence from lesson observations show that students make progress, and this is strongly supported by the responses in parents' and carers', and students', questionnaires. Students recognise the improvements in the tracking of their progress and say they now have a clear idea of their targets and how well they are doing. They appreciate the focused support they receive if they are underachieving, including during 'prep' time. They particularly enjoy practical activities where they can use their understanding and skills. For example, this was evident in the observation of a design and technology lesson where Year 11 students were building high quality farm equipment including trailers and hen houses using wood and metal. The boys displayed justifiable pride in their work and skills. It is not surprising then, that outcomes are strong at GCSE in design and technology and at BTEC in agriculture and horticulture. Conversely, outcomes in English and mathematics have been low but the clear focus on these subjects over the last year, with effective monitoring, intervention and support, has resulted in improvement. Accurate school data show that students are on course to achieve progress measures above national figures. Nevertheless, school leaders accept that improvements need to be

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embedded and developed further. In particular, although the development of high quality writing is a feature of English lessons, this is not established in other subjects.

Students enter the school with below average attainment and make satisfactory progress overall throughout their time at the school. Boys with disabilities or special educational needs and students whose circumstances make them vulnerable make at least the same progress as similar groups nationally with some, for example those with identified needs, making good progress in English. This is the result of the strong inclusive ethos found in the school.

The very small number of Year 12 students are taught at the local further education college with whom the school is a partner. They are enrolled in a range of agricultural and engineering courses, although the full range of subjects usually offered are available. The school links effectively with the college through an experienced member of the school's staff who ensures that students receive individualised support and liaises with parents and carers. Year 12 students play a full part in the life of the school including representing the students and performing duties in school and on the farm.

Quality of teaching

Most parents and carers, and students, noted in responses to the inspection questionnaires that teaching in the school is effective. There are clear strengths in teaching, particularly in practical subjects, but overall it is satisfactory because it is not consistent across the school. The high quality of relationships ensures that students are engaged, motivated and enthusiastic across the range of subjects in the planned curriculum. The support for teachers from senior leaders has led to the development of more consistent features including uniform planning, which shows attention to literacy and numeracy, sharing learning objectives with students and the use of questioning to adjust teaching strategies. The setting of students by ability has led to better-matched activities in lessons but this is not sufficiently refined in order to challenge all groups within sets appropriately, particularly the more able. In good lessons, teachers displayed high expectations, used subject knowledge effectively to ask probing questions and ensured a lively pace. Lesson activities were varied and included practical tasks, requiring students to practise their understanding and skills. However, these positive features are not evident in all lessons.

In class-based lessons where teaching was satisfactory it was characterised by a slower pace and too much work was directed by the teacher. In these lessons, there were fewer opportunities for the students to practise skills and use their knowledge and understanding, particularly in practical activities. As a result, their progress slows. Marking is regular and positive. Students who spoke to inspectors appreciated the marking which gave them clear guidance on how to improve.

There are good contributions in activities to support students' moral and social development but less to cultural influences on modern life. The boys' involvement in a working farm and their work on agriculture and horticulture courses gives them excellent opportunities to reflect on the natural environment.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' behaviour is particularly good in lessons that motivate and challenge them through active learning. This was observed in design and technology, agriculture and horticulture lessons. Following an intensive focus on the improvement in behaviour both in school and the boarding provision, led by the headteacher, students report that this has improved. However, the development of a new behaviour policy has resulted in an increase in the number of fixed-term exclusions, involving a small number of boys. Students say that in lessons disruption is not common and is dealt with firmly. Most parents and carers, and the large majority of students, agree that behaviour is good at the school, although boys did report that some lessons are occasionally disrupted. Students are proud of their roles in supporting the work of the school through such activities as membership of the school council and being prefects, together with boarding-house, school and farm duties.

In the last school year, the overall attendance rate was below the national average following a period of improving figures. This outcome was the result of the poor attendance of a few boys. The latest school figures for this year show a significant improvement. Students are friendly and courteous to each other and staff, creating a calm and harmonious working environment. Relationships are very good. Students spoken to appreciate belonging to a supportive community where everyone is valued for their contribution and encouraged to make the most of the varied opportunities available. Almost all respondents replying to the parental questionnaire noted that their sons felt safe at school. Most students noted that they were safe at school and that they are helped to do as well as they can.

The newly appointed special educational needs coordinator has quickly established procedures to support students with identified needs. A particular focus is the development of support for younger students in reading and literacy skills, although this is at an early stage. Most parents and carers noted that the school meets the particular needs of their sons. The school has implemented intensive work on anti-bullying strategies and students interviewed said bullying now was not a problem, but if it did occur, it was dealt with quickly and effectively. They were clear about how to stay safe when using the internet. Most parent, carer and student responses to the inspection questionnaire note that the school deals with bullying effectively.

Leadership and management

Since his appointment, the headteacher has rapidly introduced a comprehensive plan for improvement across the range of provision at the school. He has appointed a senior leadership team which shares his vision. As one teacher put it, the leadership team are 'relentless, determined and know where they are going'. Staff at all levels have engaged in the process for improvement, adopting new procedures to track students' progress. This has been linked with an effective training programme to improve the quality of teaching which includes regular and systematic monitoring by senior leaders, but there is a need to develop this procedure to focus more sharply on student progress. The training has, however, led to improvements in the Year 11 predicted outcomes for achievement in English and mathematics. Members of the

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governing body have supported the school through a turbulent period, making some difficult decisions. They have been supported by a board of trustees and, together, have high expectations for improvement in outcomes for students and hold senior leaders to account. However, in order to move to the next stage of the school's development, and to hold senior leaders to account for students' outcomes efficiently, there is a need to streamline the systems for both bodies. Throughout the school, there is a shared commitment to improvement which was comprehensively demonstrated by the overwhelmingly positive responses in the staff questionnaire. Nevertheless, school leaders are well aware that there is more work to do in order to meet their high aspirations. However, the rapid improvements achieved and the commitment to improvement demonstrated by staff, governors and trustees demonstrate a good capacity to improve further.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and, overall, meets students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural needs well. The curriculum is very strong in the practical vocational elements of design and technology, agriculture and horticulture. The opportunity to learn on a working farm enables the boys to develop an excellent range of skills for employment or further study within agriculture. Students' learning is enhanced by a comprehensive range of extra-curricular activities, visits and particularly sport.

Safeguarding procedures are a priority for the school, resulting in effective systems which meet all current requirements. The school's strong commitment to equality of opportunity is exemplified by its work with lower ability students and the impact of this work is seen in the narrowing of the gap in achievement with other groups of students.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



15 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Brymore School, Cannington, Bridgwater TA5 2NB

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome when we inspected your school recently. Special thanks go to the groups who met inspectors and to those of you who completed the questionnaire; we found these very useful. We enjoyed talking with all the students we met and found what you had to say very informative and relevant. I was particularly impressed with the skills displayed by the Year 11 boys making the farm equipment, henhouses and kennels when I visited the workshops.

This letter is to tell you about our findings. Brymore is a satisfactory school which is improving. You and your parents and carers told inspectors that you feel very safe in school and that staff help you in many ways to do as well as you can. Your relationships with each other and the staff are good, and you are courteous and polite. You said to inspectors that students' behaviour has improved particularly since the introduction of the new policy, although questionnaire responses told us that there can still be some disruption in lessons. So, overall, behaviour and safety are satisfactory. Achievement at the end of Year 11 is satisfactory and improving. The students in Year 12 have the full range of opportunities offered by Cannington College. Teaching is satisfactory overall with a significant proportion that is good and better.

The headteacher, senior staff, governors and trustees provide effective leadership and management. They recognise that there are aspects of the school that need improvement, and these are the areas that the inspection team identified.

- Raise attainment and improve the progress that students make by continuing to provide focused support to individuals and groups so that they achieve as well as they can. In particular, develop the quality of the writing achieved in English in other subjects as well.
- Support teachers to plan activities which will really challenge students and help them to use their knowledge and understanding in all lessons.
- Develop the way the governing body and board of trustees work so that they can support the development of the school efficiently.

You also have an important part to play by continuing to work hard and making the most of the wide range of opportunities you have at school.

Yours sincerely

Robert Pyner
Her Majesty's Inspector

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