

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



18 April 2018

Mr Mark Thomas
Headteacher
Brymore Academy
Cannington
Bridgwater
Somerset
TA5 2NB

Dear Mr Thomas

Short inspection of Brymore Academy

Following my visit to the school on 21 March 2018 with Carol Hannaford HMI, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in April 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection.

You have made significant changes to ensure the continued success of the school while maintaining the full support of staff, pupils and parents. The school is becoming increasingly popular and pupil numbers are rising steadily. Parents are confident that their children are well taught and make good progress.

Pupils are generally well behaved around the school site. They are good-humoured and friendly, and they treat adults with respect and courtesy. Pupils enjoy their lessons, particularly in practical subjects, and take part with enthusiasm. They are proud of their school.

Improving the life chances of all your pupils is at the very centre of your work. The school is distinguished by its inclusive approach, which ensures that no pupil is left behind. There is a caring and supportive ethos. The combination of a traditional academic curriculum, coupled with a very successful practical and vocational programme, is highly effective. In addition, the small size of the school and the boarding facility on-site give the school a unique flavour.

You have a highly effective leadership team and you can rely on its strong support. Leaders work tirelessly on behalf of the pupils in their care and they are keen to build upon the improvements you have made. Your self-evaluation is accurate. You identify precisely what is working well and those areas of the school that need to be

strengthened. Working with governors, and the academy trust, you have clearly defined the priorities for the school and have appropriate plans for the next stage in its development. You benefit from a strong and well-informed governing body and work well with the academy trust. The trust not only offers a wide range of support but also the freedom for the school to sustain its unique identity.

You have responded well to the areas for improvement set out in the previous inspection report. School leaders were asked to improve achievement in those subjects where performance was not consistently strong and to ensure that all subjects contribute equally to the development of pupils' literacy skills. In both cases, improvements have been made. Pupils' progress is good in most subject areas, especially considering the starting points of your pupils. You are aware of the small number of subjects where there has not been sufficient improvement and you have plans to ensure that standards are raised in these areas. There is now a strong focus on literacy across the curriculum and this is evident in every classroom. Pupils enjoy reading and appreciate how important it is to their success in examinations and future careers.

The current six-day working week adds to the difficulty of ensuring that pupils attend school regularly, as some pupils are reluctant to attend school on Saturdays. However, you acknowledge that attendance needs improving, and that persistent absence is too high.

Safeguarding is effective.

Governors and your leadership team ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are up to date, meet requirements and are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of good quality. You and other leaders, supported by well-trained governors, teachers and other staff, have created a strong culture of safety which permeates every aspect of school life. Staff work well with parents and carers and with the local authority, when appropriate, to ensure the safety of vulnerable pupils.

Staff with specific responsibilities for safeguarding take great care to ensure that they meet the needs of all pupils. There is a strong, personalised approach which parents and pupils value. You deal with incidents of bullying quickly and effectively. Pupils are confident in the measures the school has in place to keep them safe.

Vulnerable pupils are well cared for and appreciate the support given by the staff responsible for their welfare. You rightly dedicate time to ensuring that pupils are fully aware of e-safety and the risks of online bullying. Leaders keep detailed records which they check carefully to identify and act upon the lessons to be learned from any incidents that occur.

The culture of safeguarding in the school has improved in recent years as a result of comprehensive and regular training. All staff now regard safeguarding as a key aspect of their duties in school.

Inspection findings

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Classrooms are well ordered and pupils are keen to take part in activities. Pupils use the feedback their teachers give them to make good progress and respond well to the support they receive.
- Governors, leaders, teachers and other staff are committed to the school and are ambitious for its future. Staff appreciate the regular training they receive and value the excellent relationships that exist at all levels.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is strong and improving. This is because of your focus on identifying and meeting their individual needs, your careful tracking of their progress and your drive to make them independent learners.
- A key line of enquiry for the inspectors was the progress made by pupils in all year groups and across a wide range of subjects. Pupils make good progress in most subjects. Attainment is consistently good in English and improving in mathematics and science. Pupils' basic skills have improved. In a very small minority of subjects, pupils' progress and attainment are not good enough but the leadership team has well-conceived plans to bring about improvements. In particular, you are aware that the most able pupils should be making more progress from their starting points. You and your fellow leaders are taking steps to ensure that pupils deepen and reflect upon their learning more frequently to ensure that more pupils achieve the highest grades.
- Another line of enquiry considered the effectiveness of the curriculum in meeting the needs of all learners. The school has a strong core curriculum, with appropriate emphasis on mathematics and English. It also offers a wide range of vocational and practical subjects which pupils enjoy and in which they make good progress. These include agriculture and horticulture. A comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education meets the social and emotional needs of pupils effectively.
- Inspectors also explored the effectiveness of leaders in monitoring and developing the quality of teaching. Leaders have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development. The positive impact of the actions they have taken can be seen in the good achievement of current pupils.
- The final line of enquiry looked at attendance. School leaders are well aware that attendance needs improving and they are taking effective steps to ensure that more pupils attend school regularly and that persistent absence is rare.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils attend regularly and that persistent absence is rare
- teachers build on existing good practice to secure consistently good progress for pupils, especially the most able, across all year groups and subjects.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Richard Steward
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors held meetings with you and your senior team, middle leaders, representatives of the academy trust and the chief executive officer of the Bridgewater College Trust.

We talked to pupils, both formally in groups and informally around the school. We visited lessons with you and your team to observe learning and looked at the quality of work in pupils' books. We considered documentary evidence relating to the impact of the school's work, including safeguarding, pupils' attendance and how you use pupil premium funding.

Inspectors took account of 90 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and 70 written comments from parents. We also looked at the 41 responses to the staff questionnaire.