

Brimsham Green School

Broad Lane, Yate, Bristol BS37 7LB

Inspection dates

8–9 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have worked with integrity and determination to successfully improve the standard of education the school provides.
- Governors are committed to the school and are supporting the school effectively to continue its journey of improvement.
- The school is an inclusive environment. The needs of pupils, including those with complex needs, are fully met. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders have established clear expectations to raise aspirations and improve attitudes. As a result, the school is an orderly and positive environment.
- Students make good progress in the sixth form. Teaching enables them to deepen their knowledge and understanding. However, some students feel that they were not fully prepared for the demands of post-16 study.
- Pupil leadership is a strong thread throughout the school. Leaders involve pupils in decision-making and actively invite pupils to provide feedback about the quality of their experience.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils value these opportunities.
- Middle leaders have developed their skills so that they can support senior leaders to support the continuous drive for improvement.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is typically good. Leaders have established 'non-negotiables' and provide suitable training to support teachers to develop their practice. However, leaders have yet to ensure that this is consistent across all classes and subject areas.
- Disadvantaged pupils, particularly boys, do not make the progress of which they are capable. Subject leaders do not explicitly identify the barriers that such pupils need to overcome. Therefore they, and governors, cannot precisely gauge whether individual strategies have been successful.
- Leaders are working hard to improve the rate of attendance. This is having some success. However, the rate of persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils remains too high.
- Leaders are developing the programme for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). However, pupils are less secure about the influence of extremism. Younger pupils say that they require further advice and guidance to help them choose their next steps.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - sustaining improvement by ensuring that expectations are applied so that teachers' practice is consistently good across all subjects
 - middle leaders more closely identifying the gaps in understanding that exist for disadvantaged pupils and boys so that these groups of pupils make stronger progress
 - governors more precisely evaluating the impact that additional funding is having on the progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress by ensuring that:
 - teachers use assessment to plan lessons that meet the needs of all pupils, identifying misconceptions and preparing pupils for the demands of future study
 - teachers consistently expect a high standard of work, including in the way it is organised and presented, particularly from middle-prior-attaining, disadvantaged boys
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - continuing to challenge pupils who do not attend school regularly, particularly disadvantaged pupils
 - developing the curriculum for PSHE further so that it includes opportunities for pupils to reflect on a wider range of topics, such as the 'Prevent' duty, as well as the options open to them for their future plans.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Governors and leaders share a clear vision for the school, based on the raising of expectations and pupils' aspirations. Leaders are reflective, honest and committed to improving the academic standards that pupils reach. In addition, they highly value the need to provide pupils with experiences to broaden their horizons and develop their skills. There is a palpable optimism and a positive climate of mutual trust and respect. Leaders genuinely believe that 'better never stops'.
- Senior leaders know the school well. They have a convincing understanding of their roles and have the capacity to ensure that actions lead to further improvement. They have identified the right priorities and have suitable plans in place to achieve these. They have not sought to achieve 'quick wins' but have focused on actions that are incremental and sustainable. Leaders have not shied away from challenging weaker practice to ensure that the best interests of pupils are served.
- Leaders have worked productively with the local authority and are outward-looking in their approach. They seek to learn from effective practice and readily take on the advice that they are given. As a result, good progress has been made towards achieving the school's priorities and academic standards continue to improve.
- Middle leaders have evolved into a cohesive team who support and challenge each other. Leaders have provided extensive training so that subject and pastoral leaders understand their importance in achieving the school's goals and have the skills to do so. However, while middle leaders have plans in place, they have not incisively analysed the subject skills that pupils need to improve, the strategies that are in place to remedy this and the impact of these actions.
- Senior leaders challenge middle leaders robustly and model how to ensure consistent and accurate evaluation of the quality of classroom practice. Middle leaders say that they feel empowered to lead development in their curriculum areas and are well supported to challenge practice that falls short of expectations.
- As a result of better monitoring, the overall quality of teaching and learning is improving. Leaders have established the 'Visible 15' and this has provided a framework for consistency of practice and a common understanding of expectations. Leaders have now begun to shift the focus so that evaluation moves beyond compliance to the impact that these approaches are having on the development of pupils' learning. However, this approach is not consistent across the curriculum. There are still variations between subjects as well as in the quality of pupils' work in different areas of the curriculum.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) leads this provision well. There is an accurate identification of need so that pupils with SEND are well supported and make good progress from their starting points. The school has a specialist provision for pupils with physical disabilities and medical needs which meets their needs extremely well. The well-being and progress of pupils who access this provision is well monitored and evaluated. This informs regular conversations with parents and pupils. In addition to this, leaders place importance on pupils' emotional well-being and provide access to support when this is required.

- Leaders are flexible in the development of the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils and the profile of different year groups. Leaders continue to develop their provision to meet their comprehensive intake and to adapt key stage 3 to meet the demands of key stage 4 better. Leaders are astutely aware of the support required for individual pupils and work with creativity and commitment to ensure that their academic, social, emotional and therapeutic needs are met.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils, particularly boys, remains a key priority. Leaders have identified those pupils who are not achieving as well as they should. There are examples of where sharp and focused intervention is successful in improving the performance of this group. For example, the 'Aspire' programme for Year 11 pupils has been successful in improving pupils' engagement in school and their preparation for the next stages in education or training.
- Nonetheless, while the performance of disadvantaged pupils is improving, some pupils still do not make sufficient progress from their starting points. This is largely because teachers do not always adapt their planning well enough to meet the needs of this group.
- Leaders' focus on improving behaviour and attitudes to learning has created an environment where pupils can learn effectively. However, pupils recognise where inconsistencies remain in the application of agreed approaches. They note the difference this makes to their experiences in different classes. In some cases, teachers have not been able to demonstrate that they are using a conducive atmosphere for learning to secure better progress.
- Leaders are resolute in their ambition to improve standards but are mindful of staff's well-being so that they can fulfil their roles effectively. Staff recognise the rigour with which they are held to account for the effectiveness of their work but recognise that leaders' approach is considerate and empathetic.
- Leaders have established that promoting leadership at all levels is the lynchpin of their approach. To this end, they have ensured that there are many opportunities for pupils to develop these skills as well as to pursue their talents and interests. Pupils value these opportunities and are enthusiastic about the benefit these experiences have brought. Leaders ensure that all pupils are involved and encouraged to take part in these activities.

Governance of the school

- Governors hold leaders to account for the school's performance well. They ask probing questions of school leaders. They visit the school regularly to gain a first-hand indication of the quality of education the school provides. As a group, they have diligently worked to ensure that the changes made to governance structures are supported by suitable training. Consequently, governors fulfil their roles effectively and are optimistic about what the school can achieve.
- Governors have established positive and constructive relationships with school leaders. There is a shared understanding of what leaders need to do and how this will be achieved. Governors have established a suitable balance of challenge and support, ensuring that they receive the information they need to verify the efficacy of leaders' actions. Overall, this is effective, but is not as incisive when considering the impact of strategies to improve the performance of disadvantaged pupils.

- Governors engage positively with the local authority and work in a spirit of openness. They invite pupils to attend meetings to report on their experiences. They often give pupils action research projects to help them engage in school improvement in a very real way. There is, therefore, a clear sense that everyone is working together.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Governors and leaders fully understand their safeguarding responsibilities and ensure that a culture of vigilance underpins all aspects of the school's work. Staff know the potential signs of concern and understand how to use the school's system to report these. Training is up to date and incorporates regular briefings and safeguarding scenarios to ensure that staff are kept aware of pertinent issues, including protecting pupils from radicalisation, exploitation and the dangers of 'county lines'.
- Senior leaders are true advocates for pupils. They are conscientious in ensuring that pupils' safety is paramount and that they receive the right support in times of need. They follow appropriate safeguarding processes, including referrals made to the local authority. Leaders keep chronologies of actions taken and challenge when they are not satisfied with the resolution. Staff who have received training in safer recruitment ensure that adults who apply to join the school are suitable.
- Leaders make regular checks on pupils who attend alternative provision or who have a personalised timetable. Staff work proactively with external agencies and local partners to ensure that pupils are well supported when such arrangements have been made.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders monitor classroom practice effectively and consequently know the areas of strength and what is still left to do. Leaders have used this overview to identify best practice to share and to identify training needs to support teachers to refine their practice. Therefore teaching, typically, meets the needs of pupils.
- Where teaching is most effective, planning is well matched to pupils' starting points. Teachers use effective questioning to probe, develop and assess pupils' knowledge and understanding, providing appropriate challenge and support. For example, pupils in geography are prompted to justify their opinions and do so, confidently drawing upon subject vocabulary and concepts.
- Where teaching is less effective, approaches are either not fully embedded or clearly understood by teachers. As a result, pupils do not make as much progress as they should, particularly boys and disadvantaged pupils. At times, misconceptions and gaps in knowledge are not rectified, including weaknesses in spelling and punctuation. Where the sequence of learning is fragmented, this hampers pupils' ability to build on their prior knowledge.
- The majority of teachers give feedback to pupils in line with the school's assessment policy. Where this is effective, this is habitually used so that pupils clearly understand what they have done well and what they need to do next. Often, pupils' responses are detailed and show a demonstrable improvement in their understanding.

- Where this is not secure, teachers' skill in moving from compliance to the policy to using it to support pupils to make better progress, is not assured. At times, next steps are too complex for pupils to understand. In other examples, pupils know what they need to improve but it is not clear how they can do this. This leads to variability in pupils' ability to use this guidance effectively.
- Pupils' attitudes to their learning are largely positive. They comply positively to teachers' requests. Leaders have responded to some pupils' ambivalent attitudes to school by encouraging pupils to take on greater responsibility within school.
- The vast majority of parents and carers are positive about their children's experience of school. Many responses to the survey completed during the inspection highlight that parents and carers feel well informed about their children's progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. They are aware of the values of the school. These are closely aligned to British values and are integral to leaders' approach.
- Leaders have carefully evaluated how well pupils' personal, social, health and economic understanding is developed, in collaboration with pupils. In response, they have rewritten some aspects of this so that it is age-appropriate and suitably resourced. For example, pupils were enthusiastic about their recent work on first aid. However, some aspects of the curriculum require further development, such as pupils' awareness of how to recognise and protect themselves from those who might try to influence them with extreme views.
- Pupils in Year 11 and students in the sixth form are given effective advice about their options at the end of their studies. Younger pupils are less confident about the guidance they receive about their next steps in education and potential career paths.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and are well supervised on the school site. Pupils say that they have an adult in school that they can speak with if they have a concern. They say that incidents of bullying are not common but when they occur they are dealt with effectively. Pupils recognise the importance of diversity and show an understanding and appreciation of different faiths and cultures.
- Pupils understand the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and know how to keep themselves safe in their everyday lives. They are aware of the dangers posed by smoking and drugs and know how to protect themselves when online or using social media.
- A small group of pupils attend 'Pathways', a local authority pupil referral unit and medical needs provider. Leaders have a strong understanding of pupils' progress and their well-being at this provision through regular reports and meetings.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.

- The learning environment is typically positive and conducive to learning. Where expectations are high, pupils are focused on their activities. Any off-task behaviour or distraction is usually the direct result of ineffective planning or low expectations. In these cases, pupils' work is left unfinished or is poorly presented and therefore is not a useful source from which pupils can review their learning.
- Leaders have a clear overview of the patterns of behaviour incidents so that they can identify common issues and initiate preventative action. Reports of derogatory attitudes are low but are dealt with promptly where these do occur. However, a small minority of pupils find it difficult to remain within the behaviour boundaries that are set for them. Leaders use a range of strategies to ensure that exclusions are only used as a last resort. As a result, permanent exclusions and cases of pupils who are repeatedly excluded have reduced.
- The actions taken by leaders have improved rates of attendance, so it is now close to national averages. However, there are still too many disadvantaged pupils who miss school regularly. Leaders know these pupils and are working with pupils and their families to improve this situation.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Over the last three years, the progress pupils make by the end of Year 11 has improved and is now in line with the national average. Observations and scrutiny of current pupils' work, particularly in key stage 3, confirm that this continues to be the case because of improved teaching.
- In 2018, pupils made progress in line with the national average in both English and mathematics. The progress that pupils made in English has particularly improved, as a result of careful scrutiny and development of the curriculum. Current pupils in English, for example, demonstrate an ability to produce thoughtful analysis of poetic language. The most able mathematicians have the option to complete an additional GCSE in further mathematics.
- The most able pupils make progress in line with their peers nationally. In most classes, pupils are suitably challenged. However, where pupils are given the choice of task, they sometimes tend to opt for the easier option. Some students in the sixth form reflect astutely on the fact that they found the transition to key stage 5 difficult because they were not suitably prepared for the demands of post-16 study. This is evident in some of the work scrutinised during the inspection, where work does not prepare pupils sufficiently for the next stages of their education.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils, particularly middle-attaining boys, is in line with their peers nationally but continues to be below average overall. Over a three-year period there has been some improvement, particularly in mathematics and in the subjects that constitute the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). The school's own assessment information demonstrates an improvement in the performance of this group in key stage 3. Both these factors evidence that strategies in place, such as 'Fantasy Football', are beginning to have an impact. However, the legacy of weaker teaching for this group of pupils remains at key stage 4.
- Leaders' thoughtful support for pupils with SEND and the effective deployment of

teaching assistants has led to these pupils making good progress from their starting points.

- Leaders have identified pupils who arrive at the school with standards below that expected for their age. Interventions are in place and the school's evaluation shows an improvement in pupils' reading and comprehension skills as a result. Leaders place an emphasis on the development of reading for enjoyment and pupils read regularly at allocated times in the week. There is, however, some variability in how well pupils engage in this.
- The proportion of pupils who are entered for the EBacc combination of subjects is below the national figure. This is mainly due to fewer pupils choosing to take a language option. Leaders have identified this as an issue and the steps taken have led to an increase in the number of pupils choosing this as an option.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Sixth-form provision is shared with two other local schools which form the Cotswold Edge consortium. There is close liaison between each of these partners to ensure that the quality of provision is effective. Students speak highly of this and the guidance they receive, both academically and to support their well-being.
- The leadership of the sixth form is effective. Leaders carefully track the progress that students make, and subsequent action is taken where students' progress or attendance starts to fall. As a result, the progress that make students in this phase has improved, particularly for students studying applied general courses. Current students' work indicates that this continues to be the case.
- Leaders understand the importance of students developing their independent skills. To this end many students complete research projects which are diverse, imaginative and scholarly.
- Leaders are responsive to the needs of their comprehensive intake and ensure that the curriculum is modified accordingly. As a result of a curriculum that meets students' needs, recruitment to post-16 courses and successful completion of these continues to improve.
- Students consider issues that are pertinent to their age and are involved in the development of this programme. Enrichment activities are a strength. For example, students teach at the primary partner school in Uganda. Closer to home, students volunteer to work with younger pupils and groups in the community. Students regularly engage in discussion about topical issues. The requirements of the programme of study are, therefore, well met.
- Staff have established links with business and industry to supplement the curriculum of students studying vocational subjects. These placements enhance the quality of these programmes.
- In addition, staff have worked hard, and with success, to raise aspirations for students to access higher education. Consequently, the proportion of students who hold offers for places, including at Russell Group universities, has increased.
- Students who start their programmes without attaining suitable qualifications in English

and mathematics are given suitable tuition in these subjects. This leads to strong progress to improve their grades.

School details

Unique reference number	109319
Local authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10058294

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	934
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	145
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Shaun Bailey
Headteacher	Kim Garland
Telephone number	01454 868888
Website	www.brimsham.com
Email address	admin@brimsham.com
Date of previous inspection	20–21 September 2016

Information about this school

- Brimsham Green School is an average-sized 11 to 19 secondary school. The school shares its sixth-form provision with two other local schools, which form the Cotswold Edge consortium.
- The school has a specialist resource unit to meet the needs of pupils with physical disabilities and complex medical needs. Consequently, the proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils with SEND is lower than the national figure.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average.

- Most pupils are White British and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than the national average.
- A small number of pupils access alternative provision at 'Pathways', a local authority pupil referral unit and medical needs provider.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across a range of subjects and age groups and scrutinised pupils' written work. Observations were conducted jointly with members of the leadership team.
- Meetings were held with members of the leadership team and representatives from the governing body. In addition, inspectors met with curriculum and pastoral leaders. The lead inspector met with the school improvement partner and the strategic lead for education from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, both formally and informally, to discuss their views about their experience of school.
- Inspectors looked at the school's documentation, including the evaluation of the school's effectiveness and priorities for future improvement. Inspectors reviewed progress, behaviour and attendance information relating to current pupils, and governors' records.
- School policies relating to safeguarding, pupils' behaviour, the use of additional funding, including the pupil premium, and the curriculum were scrutinised.
- Inspectors considered the 124 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 74 free-text responses.

Inspection team

Sarah McGinnis, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Non Davies	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Nicholson	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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