

# Brannel School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112050
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cornwall
<b>Inspection number</b>	310774
<b>Inspection dates</b>	27–28 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mary Massey HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	704
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	M Hackney
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ray Bell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	Rectory Road St Stephen St Austell PL26 7RN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01726 822485
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<b>Age group</b>	11-16
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Brannel School is smaller than average and serves a rural area of small villages in the china clay mining district of mid-Cornwall. The number of students on the school roll has risen by more than 50% in the last 10 years. Very few students are from minority ethnic groups and only two students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is close to the national average. The school gained specialist school status in English and performing arts in 2005.

Major structural repairs to the school roof have meant that for several months, assemblies, dining and some teaching have taken place in a marquee on the school field, which has caused considerable interference with normal school activities. The headteacher and governors are working hard to ensure that the continuing repair work causes the least possible disruption to learning.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

'Super school!' This is how one parent describes Brannel. Another writes, 'A great school – good teachers, lots of sports and amazed it is on our doorstep... We feel lucky and very proud of the effort that teachers and backroom staff put into this great school'. Parents' confidence is demonstrated by the rapid increase in student numbers in recent years and is also justified, because achievement and standards have improved steadily over the last three years, with boys in particular making exceptional progress. Standards and achievement are now good. This has led to Brannel's recognition by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust as a 'most improved' school in 2007. Students too, feel proud of their school. They take exceptional care of their environment and talk very positively about their relationships with staff. The atmosphere in school is calm and purposeful because of the mature, self-regulated behaviour of most students. The vast majority enjoy their education very much and take advantage of the many opportunities the school provides. Students feel that staff know them as individuals and inspectors judged that the school provides good care, guidance and support to help them achieve as well as they can.

The school serves a close-knit community where traditional employment opportunities are becoming increasingly limited. It looks outwards confidently from the immediate local area, and creates a culture that gives students the ambition and skills that will allow them to take advantage of a fresh range of employment opportunities in Cornwall in the future. Exceptionally flexible and creative curriculum arrangements, in conjunction with good and sometimes outstanding teaching, ensure that students in Year 10 and 11 are extremely well motivated, make good progress and are well prepared for future success. Close collaboration, including common timetabling between four schools and a local college, allows students a wide choice of subjects, which are taught where expertise is the greatest. This allows them to follow courses that are matched well to their needs and aspirations. Students also make good progress in Years 7 to 9, particularly boys in English, and this is helped by the efforts of the school librarian in encouraging boys to read for pleasure. However, the curriculum arrangements for Years 7 to 9 are less well developed than for Years 10 and 11 and do not always engage students fully. Although teaching is generally good across the school, in Years 7 to 9 it is occasionally less stimulating and lacks pace, so some students lose interest and behave less well. The choice of English and performing arts as a specialism has been very effective. Concentrating on developing oral and performance skills in English, drama and music has developed articulate, self-assured students, who express themselves well and take responsibility for their progress.

The quality of leadership and management is good and progress made in recent years indicates that the school has good capacity to improve. Thorough systems exist for self-evaluation and monitoring the school's work, with a strong focus on improvement. As the impact of actions taken is not always measured sufficiently, priorities are sometimes not focused clearly enough. Senior and middle managers make teaching and support staff feel valued so they are encouraged to be fully involved in the life of the school. They frequently 'go the extra mile' to help students and provide exciting experiences for them both in and out of the classroom. The teaching and support staff, senior managers and governors work together as a strong and effective team. Their positive approach maintained morale during the considerable disruption caused by urgent repairs to a major part of the school. The governors, in particular, have been exceptionally supportive in seeing the school through this difficult time.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the curriculum and the consistency of teaching in order to effectively motivate all students in Years 7 to 9.
- Extend the self-evaluation and target setting procedures so their impact is assessed more regularly to inform future planning.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Achievement and standards have risen steadily over the last three years and students now make good progress and attain average standards at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Since the last inspection, the school has made exceptional progress in improving the achievement of boys, who, against the national trend, now outperform girls in the mathematics and science tests at the end of Year 9. The gap between boys' and girls' attainment at GCSE is also smaller than that found nationally. The number of students achieving five or more A\*- C grades increased substantially in 2007 as did the number who achieved five or more A\*- C grades including English and mathematics. In English, all students, but boys in particular, who have exceptionally low starting points in writing skills, make very good progress. On entry to the school in Year 7, students' attainment in mathematics is below the national average but because they make good progress, by the end of Year 9 they reach standards close to the national average. Over the last few years, progress in mathematics for students in Years 10 and 11 has not matched that in other subjects, but the current Year 11 cohort is now achieving well. The school has clear strategies in place to build on this success and increase achievement further. Students make particularly good progress in English, art, music, drama, physical education, geography and history. Students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make very good progress towards their targets.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Students' social and moral development is good. As part of developing its English and performing arts specialist status, the school encourages students to acquire excellent speaking and listening skills. Discussion and public-speaking activities feature regularly in lessons, at the school council and outside school. This gives students the opportunity to think critically and express their views about a wide range of moral and social issues. Performing arts also provide valuable spiritual and cultural experiences. For instance, a group of students enjoyed visiting London to devise a performance piece alongside production staff at the Royal Opera House. The school develops students' understanding of both local and international cultures. Students benefit from opportunities to investigate and celebrate Cornish culture, which adds to their sense of pride and identity in their area. Their knowledge of the range of cultural and ethnic diversity within Britain is limited in the younger age groups, but improves as they move up through the school.

Physical education is extremely popular both in and out of lesson time and students participate enthusiastically in the wide range of sporting activities on offer. This, with good uptake of healthy school meals, indicates that students are aware of the importance of looking after their health. They know how to keep themselves safe. Students make a good contribution to the local community, for example by helping in local primary schools, planting trees in environmental projects or staging popular and well attended major musical productions. Older students have

many opportunities to take responsibility for others, for example through the prefect and the 'buddy' systems. They develop skills for future life through work experience and working alongside practitioners from local business on enterprise days where they gain knowledge and skills relevant to the developing local economy.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school's view of the quality of teaching and learning is accurate. Overall, teaching is effective because students make good progress in their learning. There are some examples of exemplary practice, particularly in Years 10 and 11. In general, teaching is planned well, with lesson objectives clearly identified and activities carefully chosen to both match the objectives and the abilities of the students. The individual support provided by teachers and teaching assistants increases students' knowledge, skills and understanding well. Relationships between staff and students are very good and the assessment of students' work is regular. Students are actively involved in lessons and as result, behave well, are keen to participate and are respectful of each other's views.

Where teaching is outstanding, students make exceptionally good progress. For example, in an information and communication technology (ICT) lesson, the detailed planning, combined with very clear, skilful questioning, led to students firmly developing their understanding of writing for a variety of audiences. In a catering lesson, the excellent planning, classroom management and use of assessment in a continuous way resulted in very impressive gains in understanding. Target setting in these lessons was accompanied by appropriate strategies for improvement so that students knew exactly what to do to improve and could act upon this information effectively.

Some teaching, however, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9, is characterised by activities that are not linked well enough to students' needs and abilities. In these lessons, a limited variety of less stimulating activities and slow pace mean that students are not consistently challenged in their learning and they do not understand what strategies to use to improve their work. On such occasions, a minority of students lose interest and behave less well, so reducing the amount of learning taking place.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school has given considerable thought to providing a curriculum that meets the needs of students aged 14 to 16. Common timetables with other schools and strong partnership with the local college mean the school offers 30 courses, including vocational options such as construction and engineering. Some courses, such as catering, are particularly relevant to an area where tourism is a major source of employment. Since gaining specialist status, the number of students taking one or more performing arts courses has increased considerably. Older students appreciate the range of subjects, enjoy those they choose and achieve well. The school encourages high ambition and prepares students very well for transition to college and future employment. In Years 7, 8 and 9, although there are two ability streams, the curriculum arrangements are almost identical and are not currently flexible enough to meet different students' needs. Some students find it difficult to adjust to 17 or more teachers in a week.

Staff use creative approaches to timetabling subjects such as enterprise, citizenship and health education and plan in detail so they cover them very well. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements, including provision for ICT and reporting citizenship to parents, which were criticised in the last inspection report. The school provides an extensive range of extra-curricular activities including sports and performing arts. Students' participation is very high and they appreciate the way teachers encourage them to be involved, even providing transport if necessary.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The quality of care and support is excellent. Staff are vetted thoroughly for suitability and robust child protection procedures are in place. Risk assessments and other checks are carried out appropriately for the school premises and for off-site activities. There are good procedures in place to deal with bullying, and students are confident that occasional problems will be dealt with rapidly. The school cares very well for vulnerable students, tracking their progress very carefully, and making sure that they receive first-rate additional support in class. Teaching assistants are well trained and enthusiastic about their work. Outside agencies make a valuable contribution when additional specialist support and advice are needed. An outstandingly well organised 'Learning to Learn' programme helps students to understand the importance of personal, health and safety issues, as well as offering a wider perspective on social and moral development and an understanding of their role as citizens.

Teachers know individuals well and give invaluable personal guidance, particularly for choosing options in Year 9. The quality of academic guidance is effective in some subjects, where the school's well organised and regular testing and assessment system underpins an ambitious target setting programme. However, at present, the quality of this guidance is inconsistent across subjects. In some subjects, assessments are not translated into clearly understood targets, and students do not receive sufficiently specific advice on how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve further. Comprehensive plans are in place to standardise and improve these aspects across the school.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Strengths and weaknesses of the school are clearly identified from thorough analysis of the results in national tests and GCSE examinations and regular effective self-evaluation. Issues for development are focused well on appropriate areas for improvement at both whole school and departmental level. Amongst middle managers, some good practice has a positive impact on the progress that students make and their results. However, systems for measuring the impact of actions are underdeveloped, so data are not always readily available to inform future planning. Much of the professional development for staff uses expertise already present within the school. Both teachers and support staff are keen to improve their skills and knowledge so that students can learn even more effectively. The headteacher and senior leadership team have created a happy and supportive environment for staff and students, with a focus on increasing both aspirations and achievement.

Although there have been improvements to some accommodation described as inadequate at the last inspection in 2004, these current repairs are only expected to last three years. The

overall standard of existing accommodation is restricting progress, particularly in developing the school's specialist status. Governors are urgently pursuing plans for a new school building.

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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?	2
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

How good is 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
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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 the learners' needs?	2
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

<sup>1</sup> Grade 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

29 February 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Brannel School, St Austell, PL26 7RN

I would like to thank you for the very positive and friendly way in which you welcomed us and told us about your school when we came to visit in February. In return, I would like to tell you about what we found out. I hope some of you will also read the full inspection report, which you will find on [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Brannel is a good school. Both you and your parents are very satisfied with the education you receive, and this is not surprising, because the amount of progress that students make has improved a great deal over the last few years, so achievement and standards are now good. Boys in particular are achieving as well as girls, which is not generally the case nationally. We were impressed with the way in which the curriculum is organised in collaboration with other schools and the college in St Austell in Years 10 and 11, so that the choice of subjects you can study is very wide. This means that courses are likely to be available that are interesting and useful for employment or training, especially as the kind of work available in Cornwall alters in the future. We found that motivation is not so high in Years 7, 8 and 9 because the curriculum is not so interesting. Sometimes teaching is not so stimulating and some of you get bored. We have asked the school to improve these aspects of its work.

Performing arts specialist status has had a very positive impact on your achievement too. Your work in English, music and drama makes you very confident and articulate. You participate in activities that contribute to the school community and the atmosphere in the school is very calm and purposeful. You look after the environment well and we were particularly impressed by the quality of artwork around the school. Many of you told us how much you enjoy sport too.

We know that you are often asked your opinions about the school. Your headteacher and the staff work hard to identify priorities for improvement. We have asked them to improve the way in which they measure how effective the changes they have made are, so that the decisions they make about what to do next are exactly the right ones to help the school get even better.

I wish all of you the very best for the future.

Mary Massey Her Majesty's Inspector