

Inspection of Three Bridges School

Kea Downs Road, Blackwater, Truro, Cornwall TR4 8EG

Inspection dates: 12–14 November 2019

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Three Bridges School is a very special place. Pupils who have struggled to find acceptance in other schools receive a warm welcome here. Parents and carers who have felt isolated and unsupported find friendly staff who want to understand their child. As one parent put it: 'It's amazing here. Staff continually make sure things work. If something isn't working – they try something else. Life at home has improved massively.'

The inspirational headteacher is ambitious for the school. Her aim is that pupils will learn to understand their special educational needs and be very well prepared for their futures when the time comes to leave school. The staff team provide strong support for the headteacher. They share her commitment to helping all pupils to achieve their potential.

This is a safe, happy school. Pupils know that every member of staff wants them to experience success. Behaviour in school is excellent. If a pupil becomes upset, highly skilled staff provide support to reduce their anxiety. Time is then spent working out how to stop the same thing happening again.

There are strong relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils get on well with each other and share any concerns with staff so that bullying is not an issue in this school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The curriculum is highly personalised. When pupils join the school, staff take time to get to know them. Staff identify the strengths, hobbies and interests of each new pupil. There is also an assessment of each new pupil's ability to cope with being with other pupils. This helps leaders to develop an appropriate curriculum for every pupil. It also enables leaders to place each new pupil in the right class or group.

All pupils have an individual programme of study carefully matched to their special educational needs. Pupils can work individually with staff or be part of small groups. Pupils who chose to work alone with staff have the opportunity to socialise with other pupils whenever it is appropriate.

Leaders are aware that their pupils could become very attached to the school and find moving on difficult. Pupils learn a range of subjects, but there is always a very strong focus on personal development. Visiting new places, meeting new people and developing independent living skills are a fundamental part of the curriculum.

There is a continual emphasis on having aspirations for the future. Leaders encourage pupils and their parents to think about what they will do when they leave school. Staff link learning activities to the aspirations of pupils. This helps pupils develop an understanding of what they need to do to be successful in the future.

There are opportunities for pupils to visit workplaces to help them choose a future career. Sometimes these visits show a pupil that the reality of that type of work is not for them. When this happens, staff draw up new plans and organise new workplace experiences. This links closely to the aim of the school to prepare pupils to move on from Three Bridges.

Pupils learn much about the importance of tolerance and respect for other people. Pupils understand the need to accept different opinions. There is a clear expectation that pupils show respect for different lifestyles and religions. Pupils understand the importance of this. High levels of respect are very evident throughout the school.

For pupils in the sixth form leaders handle transition to the next stage of their education very sensitively. The work completed earlier on aspirations helps ensure that pupils have realistic and achievable plans. Visits and meetings with new providers help to give pupils confidence about the future. Staff support pupils very well as they move on to new places. As a parent of a recent leaver said: 'Without the school, my son wouldn't be where he is today. They have been fantastic.'

Leaders have introduced a more flexible approach to teaching the curriculum this year. This enables teachers to respond to the needs and interests of pupils very quickly. Pupils can take control of their learning, which helps to maintain their interest and enthusiasm in lessons. Pupils gain nationally recognised qualifications that are closely linked to the pupil's future plans. Leaders are currently establishing this new approach across the school.

The proprietor shares the headteacher's vision for the school. There are systems in place to ensure that the proprietor knows what is happening in school. For example, the headteacher provides regular reports to the proprietor and her management team. These reports form the basis for discussion at management meetings. This helps the proprietor to hold the headteacher to account. It also ensures that the work of the school develops in line with the shared vision of the proprietor and headteacher.

At the time of the last inspection all independent school standards were met. This is still the case. The school also meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff take seriously their responsibility to make sure pupils are safe. Staff are well trained and know the signs that a pupil may need help or support. There are well-established systems in place for sharing concerns with leaders. Leaders respond appropriately to concerns. They seek support from outside agencies when needed.

Staff help pupils to understand risks, including the potential dangers of the internet. Staff are proactive in responding to issues raised by pupils. Staff use these opportunities to extend pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The approach to delivering the curriculum has changed, moving away from previous schemes of work to a more flexible approach to planning and delivering lessons. This approach is very responsive to pupils' needs and interests. Leaders must ensure that this approach continues to provide pupils with a broad range of learning and enables them to achieve highly.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	129252
DfE registration number	908/6095
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10107532
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	15
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	7
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Mary Simpson
Headteacher	Kathleen Hampshire
Annual fees (day pupils)	£55,385–£101,555
Telephone number	01872 561010
Website	3bridges.co.uk
Email address	3bridges@spectrumasd.org
Date of previous inspection	21–23 February 2017

Information about this school

- The maximum number of pupils on roll has changed from 10 to 15 since the last inspection.
- The school does not use an alternative provision for current pupils.
- The school caters for pupils with an autism spectrum disorder.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- We met with the proprietor, headteacher and senior leaders.
- We looked, in particular, at the quality of the curriculum in English, mathematics and personal, social, health and economic education.
- We met with two parents and spoke on the telephone to a third parent. Emails from three parents and one text response to Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, were also considered as part of the inspection.
- We spoke to pupils in lessons and informally during social times. We discussed their work, what pupils thought about behaviour and bullying. We also talked about how well the school prepared pupils for the future.
- We scrutinised a wide range of documentary information to check on the statutory requirements of the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Mark Burgess, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Julie Nash

Ofsted Inspector

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