

Three Bridges

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number	908/6095
Unique Reference Number (URN)	129252
Inspection number	345553
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Thomas Fisher-Smith

Published:

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A¹ of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Three Bridges School is a small special school owned and managed by the Devon and Cornwall Autistic Community Trust. It is located near Truro and provides education for up to 12 students, aged from 11 to 19 years, who are diagnosed as being on the autistic spectrum. All students have a statement of special educational needs, but their levels of attainment on entry range from well below to higher functioning Asperger. Presently there are seven male students on roll. One student attends on a part-time basis, receiving the balance of his education elsewhere. The students travel daily to the school from residences provided by the trust, as most are in public care, or from their own home. The school aims to provide and prepare students for a lifestyle that is happy and dignified and which reflects normality as much as possible. The school was officially opened in April 2005 and was last inspected in June 2007.

Evaluation of the school

Three Bridges School provides an outstanding quality of education that fully meets its aims. The school achieves this by meticulous planning and organisation throughout its provision. The quality of the curriculum and of teaching and assessment is outstanding, and leads to most students making outstanding progress. The provision for the welfare and safety of students is outstanding and they flourish in an atmosphere that is both nurturing yet challenging. Safeguarding and child protection arrangements are rigorous and implemented effectively. Since the last inspection the school has made considerable progress in improving what it provides for students; this has been achieved by skilled management and the dedication of staff who use their considerable expertise to the benefit of students. The school meets all the regulations required for its continued registration.

Quality of education

Three Bridges School provides an outstanding quality of education for its students. It achieves this through a broad and outstanding curriculum that is carefully structured and targeted to provide for the individual needs of each student. Students have a person centred plan (PCP), which is used as a route map for their academic and

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

personal development. The provision for the personal, social and health education of students is included within this and it adds considerably to their personal development.

Teachers use different frameworks in order to plan the curriculum. These include the Equals Moving On curriculum as well as the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network. For post-16 students the school also employs the Valuing People approach, to which has been added elements of the national Every Child Matters initiative, such as 'Being healthy and staying safe'. Where a student has a statement of special educational needs, the requirements of this are met in full.

The curriculum has an appropriate emphasis on the development of communication and numeracy skills, which enable each student to be a full participant in their learning. All students have full access to the required areas of learning appropriate to their age. The curriculum is highly effective because it focuses on the outcomes that students are expected to achieve and supports these with thoughtful and detailed planning, which result in very effective lessons. This planning also takes close account of how the students learn best as well as what their interests are.

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding. Lessons are periods of intense learning during which most students make discernible progress. Lessons are planned with attention to meticulous detail that takes account of the ways in which a student learns best, as well as the methods required to support that learning. The lessons are focused according to the needs identified within each student's statement of special educational needs. The teaching is particularly effective because all teachers provide challenging tasks for students. These tasks are matched well to the prior attainment of students and take students' knowledge beyond that which they already understand. Teachers consistently assess and evaluate the outcomes to their lessons. Skills of speaking and listening are consistently developed alongside other forms of communication, such as the picture exchange communication system. The impact of this is that students take a full part in lessons and their enthusiasm for learning is outstanding.

The progress that students make, when compared to their original starting points, is outstanding. The quality of teaching is such that all students make progress irrespective of their previous level of attainment. Higher attaining students have already become accredited in GCSE subjects, such as mathematics, and have continued their studies to AS level. Lower attaining students improve in their capability to communicate and make choices, which affect their lives. Parents are unanimous in saying how pleased they are with the improvements they see in their children since they have been attending the school.

Since the last inspection the school has continued to improve. It has responded to a previous recommendation by employing the services of a speech and language therapist. In conjunction with the extended range of other therapies this has

significantly improved the communication skills of all students and made their learning more effective.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

The provision for the spiritual, moral and social development of students is outstanding. The impact of this is that students develop their characters and social skills to levels which, at the outset, might not have been anticipated. All students clearly know the differences between right and wrong.

The students develop self-esteem and self-confidence because of the many experiences they undertake. The simplest of these involves going to the local shops to buy ingredients for their cookery lessons; others involve taking part in adventure activities at a nearby specialist centre. The school also, uniquely, runs its own scout group, which involves students in many challenging activities, which they successfully accomplish.

Substantial links with the local community ensure that students develop outstanding community awareness. These links include those with the local police and ambulance service. Visits to and visits by the personnel from these establishments give the students a keen awareness of their own part in the wider community.

Provision within the curriculum enables students to have a view and appreciation of the wider world as well as British institutions. Projects within geography, for example, introduce the notions of differences between nations as well as the international nature of British society.

The recommendations of the Every Child Matters framework and the manner in which these are woven into the provision ensure that students enjoy their time at the school. This is evidenced by their high rates of attendance. Because they are content at the school, students' attitudes to learning are outstanding and levels of concentration in lessons are remarkable. In most cases the behaviour of individuals is also outstanding. This results from the considerable care and support provided by staff who treat the students with the utmost respect. By the time they come to leave the school, students have developed into well-rounded individuals whose interpersonal skills have improved, alongside their ability to make choices and accept change. The provision has improved since the last inspection because it is now more effectively planned to be included within the wider school activity.

Welfare, health and safety of the students

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of students is outstanding. The school management has prepared and implemented rigorous procedures that ensure the health and safety of pupils at all times. All appropriate policies are in place and implemented very effectively. Safeguarding and child protection procedures are implemented rigorously. Risk assessments are compiled for each student that are

outstanding in their detail. The school management has ensured that all staff are trained to the highest levels in safeguarding awareness and that their knowledge is constantly updated. This represents an improvement since the last inspection.

Students are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles by being offered many opportunities for vigorous physical activities. In conjunction with the provision within the curriculum, including information about healthy foods, students are enabled to understand the concept of being healthy and the ways in which they can achieve this. Within the curriculum for personal, social and health education students are introduced to the notions of personal safety as well as the dangers of drug misuse.

Students indicate they feel safe at the school. All staff are particularly vigilant in their supervision of students; they do this in such a skilled way that the predominant atmosphere within the school is calm and relaxed. Staff are provided with outstanding and detailed information about each student; this relates to the types of behaviours and responses that students might exhibit when in relaxed or agitated states. This forewarning enables staff to successfully manage the students in ways that assist significantly students' personal development.

The school has improved its range of therapeutic provision since the last inspection. For example, the contributions of the speech and language therapist as well as a consultant child psychiatrist have greatly benefited the personal development of the students.

The school has addressed appropriately the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has comprehensive procedures in place that are rigorously implemented to ensure that all staff who may have access to the students are appointed on the basis of their suitability to work with children. The central register of staff is in place.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are maintained to a high standard. The impact of this is that the school is a safe and effective place in which students can learn. Specialist facilities, such as a computer suite, food technology room and art room enhance the curriculum that is provided for students.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Since the last inspection the school has continued to improve the quality of the information it provides to parents and others. The combination of the prospectus and the web site provides a comprehensive and up-to-date range of information. Parents indicate they receive, without prompting, all the information they require.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a clearly laid out and appropriate complaints policy, the existence of which is made known to parents.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ('the Regulations').

Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of students	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of students' needs	✓			
How well students make progress in their learning	✓			

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of students	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of students

The overall welfare, health and safety of students	✓			
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School details

Name of school	Three Bridges		
DCSF number	908/6095		
Unique reference number (URN)	129252		
Type of school	Special		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	April 2005		
Age range of students	11–19 years		
Gender of students	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 7	Girls: 0	Total: 7
Number on roll (part-time students)	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number of students with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 7	Girls: 0	Total: 7
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 6	Girls: 0	Total: 6
Annual fees (day students)	£14,250 – £24,914		
Address of school	Three Bridges Nr Blackwater Truro Cornwall TR4 8EG		
Telephone number	01872 561010		
Fax number	01326 371099		
Email address	tyler.collins@dcact.eu.com		
Headteacher	Mr Tyler Collins		
Proprietor	Spectrum		
Reporting inspector	Mr Thomas Fisher-Smith		
Dates of inspection	3–4 March 2010		