

Brixham College

Address: Higher Ranscombe Road, Brixham, Devon, TQ5 9HF

Unique reference number (URN): 137755

Inspection report: 31 March 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	     
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's 'values' curriculum is comprehensive, helping pupils to understand the world, others and reflect on their relationships. Leaders pay close attention to any relevant issues arising locally, or nationally, in particular any that present risks to pupils. These issues are addressed on dedicated curriculum days, which pupils value, enjoy, and attend well. Care is taken that sensitive or specialist topics are taught by staff who know pupils well and/or have the right expertise.

Pupils develop useful knowledge of financial matters. There are other topics where their knowledge is generally sound but lacks depth. For instance, pupils know what democracy is in principle but are less sure of the role of the Houses of Parliament. Leaders have identified a need to further develop pupils' understanding of the protected characteristics to challenge examples of intolerance, occasionally shown by pupils making unkind comments.

Leaders go to lengths to ensure that all pupils access the school's 'values' curriculum. If pupils do some of their learning off site, this is planned around the personal development curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are helped to take away the same messages as their peers through adapted lessons.

Pupils reflect on their own beliefs and consider the experiences of others in their philosophy and ethics lessons. The extra-curricular offer provides opportunities for pupils to develop their interests and social skills. An ambitious range of sports are catered for, reflecting the local environment, such as rowing. Pupils look forward to 'The MMADD Show', an annual event showcasing pupils' music and dance achievements from both internal and external clubs.

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, benefit from a well-organised careers programme. This includes a taught careers curriculum as well as wider experiences of the world of work and enterprise. Pupils are well-informed about possible careers and their options once they leave school.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

For two years, pupils' achievement in national tests has been below average. The gap between the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils and their non-disadvantaged peers nationally widened. The school has focused on standard passes in GCSE English and mathematics, securing some improvements in 2025 for disadvantaged pupils. Most students in the sixth form study for A-level qualifications. Their overall achievement declined in 2025, although the school secured more top grades than the previous year.

Pupils make appropriate progress in reading from Year 7. However, they do not build the wider skills and knowledge that they need for success in Year 11 and beyond. Many do not

write fluently or accurately. The school is reliant on late interventions to bolster success in examinations. Increasingly, pupils are building vocabulary and detailed knowledge as they move through the school. Leaders recognise there is more to do to ensure that this is reflected in high achievement at the end of their programmes of study.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Overall attendance is below the national average, although there has been some marginal improvement year-on-year. The proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, who are persistently absent from school, is reducing, but remains very high. The attendance of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is close to average and has remained stable over time. The school has recently reinvigorated its approach to improving attendance through celebration events and individual action plans. It is too soon for this to have had a sustained impact.

The school is undergoing a transition as expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes towards learning are raised. It is often the case that pupils do not cooperate fully with the school's expectations, as such, suspensions remain high. Although pupils continue to experience some disruption, generally, the atmosphere in lessons supports learning. Pupils are getting used to new arrangements at the start of the day. A significant number still require support to arrive on time and be equipped for school.

A trained team of pupil anti-bullying ambassadors helps to ensure that any bullying is reported to staff. Leaders use the curriculum to educate pupils about types of bullying, including cyber-bullying and prejudiced comments. Some pupils and families do not have confidence that bullying is being tackled. Leaders recognise this and have reviewed their procedure to strengthen communication with pupils and families who report bullying.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Leaders have a clear vision for how they want pupils to learn. Some aspects are more embedded than others. For example, approaches requiring pupils to map their thinking and to think from different perspectives are well-established. By contrast, adapting teaching considering different pupils' needs is at an early stage. Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching based on rigorous monitoring. This informs ongoing training for staff.

The curriculum is designed to ensure that pupils read widely and often. The school helps pupils to read well over time by providing supported practice. Teaching helps pupils to complete extended writing tasks with support. However, addressing apparent gaps in pupils' writing skills, so that pupils become fluent, accurate, writers over time, has not been prioritised sufficiently. Plans to develop pupils' spoken language skills are also in their infancy.

Pupils follow a broad curriculum that is generally well planned. Pupils are deliberately exposed to important subject words before meeting them in the curriculum. Teaching, however, is not consistently effective. At times, the work given to pupils reflects low

expectations. This makes it difficult for pupils to build up the confident knowledge they need to tackle the challenges that the curriculum holds later.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

The support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has not been reliable over time. Families have low confidence in the school's ability to meet pupils' needs. This is being addressed as a priority. Leaders have drawn together a range of staff and services to form a team around each pupil. This is helping the school to identify pupils' needs and provide the right blend of support. Staff receive regular, focused training about how to adapt their teaching to support most pupils to learn. The programme of staff training is shaped by leaders' monitoring of pupils' experiences. This work is at an early stage as there remain significant inconsistencies in how well pupils' individual needs are met.

Disadvantaged pupils face significant barriers because weak writing skills go unaddressed and much learning is missed due to regular absences. Leaders are working with partners in the local area to develop early interventions which help to reduce exclusions and build better attendance. Support is provided in school to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are ready to learn each day and have access to enrichment activities. All of this is helping to improve pupils' relationships with school. Effective personal and academic support for looked-after children and those known to social care is well established.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Since the previous inspection, improvements have not been sustained for long enough to have had a lasting impact. In light of this, the trust has recently acted to provide the leadership capacity that the school needs to embed real change.

Trust leaders have set out a clear model for improving teaching and leadership across the school through staff development. They are working with other schools to provide early intervention for pupils at risk of disengaging from education. Their school improvement plans show urgency on the right priorities, for example, ensuring that teaching meets the needs of all pupils. However, as implementation is at an early stage, it is too soon to see the impact take effect across the provision.

Staff value the renewed investment in their professional development. They are optimistic about the school's capacity to improve. They recognise that new leadership is beginning to improve the conditions in the school. Staff workload is managed effectively and considerately across the school year.

The school benefits from the support and challenge of a well-informed academy governing board. The quality and impact of their work is assured by the trust. Governors have a realistic view of standards in the school and the key concerns of parents and carers. However, they recognise that there is more to do to re-build trust and communicate more effectively with families as the school moves forward with its plans for rapid improvement.

The sixth form offers a broad and interesting range of A-level qualifications and applied courses. A-level achievement was below average in 2025. Students often make better progress from their starting points on applied courses, but only a minority study these. Leaders have made some changes to the curriculum to offer alternative courses where achievement has been weak. Leaders do not fully understand the reasons for declining achievement and retention of students on courses in the sixth form. As such, they are not clear how to bring about sustained improvements.

Students follow a work-related learning and careers programme that helps them to secure ongoing placements in work, education or training. There is a focus on supporting students to gain university places on competitive courses. The school engages with local higher education institutions and the voluntary and charity sectors to support disadvantaged students to go to university. Students with vulnerabilities such as special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to social care are well looked after in the sixth form. These students receive the pastoral and academic support they need to achieve positive outcomes.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils speak knowledgeably on some topics, using relevant technical and subject vocabulary to explain themselves. From Year 7, reading is supported well. These strengths, however, have not resulted in pupils achieving well in national tests, including in the sixth form. This is because expectations have been too low over time. There has not been a sustained effort to improve pupils' writing. The support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) remains inconsistent. It has been difficult for pupils to succeed due to poor rates of attendance and disruptive behaviour.

The school is undergoing a period of change as leaders work to raise standards. Systems are being tightened up. Pupils are expected to arrive on time and equipped for learning. Support is provided, for example, the 'Right Start' kiosk issues uniform and stationery. The school's breakfast club helps to set disadvantaged pupils up for the day. Pupils recognise that a renewed focus on behaviour has reduced disruptive incidents.

Pupils and parents raise concerns about bullying and the amount of time that pupils spend in the school's 'study hub' when teachers are absent. The school understands these concerns and has responded effectively. The procedure for responding to bullying reports has been strengthened. The student parliament, and pupil groups of anti-bullying and mental health ambassadors are playing a role in establishing a more positive environment. The quality of work and the time that pupils spend in the 'study hub' is closely monitored.

Every pupil gets the benefit of the school's 'values' curriculum. This teaches them how to lead safe, healthy and productive lives. Pupils with SEND supported by staff in the 'The Harbour', have 'values' lessons adapted to meet their needs. The extra-curricular offer is

prioritised as an important investment in pupils' development. Through targeted funding and adaptations, the school aims to involve disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND fully.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that pupils consistently benefit from the adaptations to the curriculum and teaching that they need, so that they each have every opportunity to achieve highly.
 - Leaders should ensure that weaknesses in pupils' writing are identified early and addressed effectively.
 - Leaders should check carefully that their attendance strategy is working to secure sustained improvements in pupils' overall attendance and further reduce persistent absence.
 - Leaders and governors should develop regular and constructive communication with families, to build trust and confidence as improvements are embedded across the school.
 - Leaders should continue to develop their strategic oversight of the school's improvement priorities, ensuring that improvements are implemented effectively and bring about a sustained impact over time.
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About this inspection

This school is part of the Thinking Schools Academy Trust which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Stuart Gardner, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Gerard Newman.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMI.

Inspectors spoke with the principal and members of the school's senior leadership team, the CEO and regional director from the trust, and a group of trustees and academy board members, including the chair of the trust during the inspection.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The inspector(s) confirmed the following information about the school:

The school includes a specially resourced provision for autistic pupils. The provision is called 'The Harbour' and there are 18 places.

The school currently makes use of 5 alternative provisions, including 4 that are unregistered.

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. A new principal joined the school in January 2026.

Principal: Rebecca Blackshaw

Lead inspector:

Lydia Pride, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Malcolm Willis, Ofsted Inspector

Jan Woodhouse, Ofsted Inspector

Sophie Laing, Ofsted Inspector

Kelly Olive, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 31 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,053

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

1,050

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

30.60%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

4.94%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

12.92%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

Resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

ASD - Autistic Spectrum Disorder

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	22.4%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	30.2%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	35.4%	45.3%	Below

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	36.7	46.0	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	37.2	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	40.8	46.3	Below

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.74	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.21	-0.03	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	8.5%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	15.1%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	28.6%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	25.8	34.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	29.0	34.6	Below
2022/23 (final)	38.1	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-1.28	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.35	-0.57	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (revised)	8.5%	53.1%	-44.6 pp
2023/24 (final)	15.1%	53.1%	-38.0 pp
2022/23 (final)	28.6%	52.4%	-23.9 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (revised)	25.8	50.4	-24.6
2023/24 (final)	29.0	50.0	-21.0
2022/23 (final)	38.1	50.3	-12.2

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-1.28	0.16	-1.45
2022/23 (final)	-0.35	0.17	-0.52

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (provisional)	95%	91%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	93%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	95%	94%	Average

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	23.14	34.99	Below
2023/24 (final)	24.83	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	33.05	34.16	Close to average

A-level value added

A score showing students’ progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	-0.6	0.0	Below
2023/24 (revised)	0.0	0.0	Close to average

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	11.0%	8.1%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	14.5%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	12.3%	9.0%	Above

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	32.1%	21.9%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	43.3%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	39.8%	26.5%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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