

Belvedere Preparatory School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Peter Toft

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

The school was originally founded in 1880, moving in 1939 to its current premises in a residential area of south Liverpool. It occupies a former Victorian merchant's house which has four floors and extensive outdoor space. Originally, it was the junior department of The Belvedere School, providing for girls aged from three to 11 years. In September 2006, it separated from this school, becoming the Hamlets Preparatory School; in September 2010, ownership transferred to new proprietors and it was re-named The Belvedere Preparatory School. Boys began to be admitted to the nursery and reception classes in 2010 and the school is becoming fully co-educational as these year groups move up the age range.

The school receives the nursery funding grant for all of the 31 children aged under five years in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Currently, there are 109 pupils on roll; none of them has a statement of special educational needs. The school provides an independent education for pupils of a wide ethnic, social and religious mix who come from a large area of Merseyside. The school aims for its pupils 'to receive a robust, challenging and inspiring 21st century education, preparing them for life and making the primary schooling years filled with rich and memorable experiences' and to achieve high academic standards. The educational provision was last inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate in February 2005 when it was the junior department of The Belvedere School. Provision for care in the after-school club was last inspected on 4 May 2006.

Evaluation of the school

The Belvedere Preparatory School provides a good quality of education; aspects of this provision are outstanding. The good curriculum is well supported by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities and outstanding provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teaching is good throughout the school, procedures for assessing pupils' progress are excellent and pupils' behaviour and progress are outstanding. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make excellent progress as a result of outstanding provision. The school's procedures to

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

promote the welfare and safeguarding of pupils are robust and staff implement them diligently; all regulatory requirements are met. The school has improved significantly since its last inspection and meets its aims exceptionally well.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good; aspects of provision are outstanding, including that in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The full range of subjects of the National Curriculum is covered together with French and personal, social and health education. Appropriately strong emphasis is placed on literacy and numeracy, both within English and mathematics and in other subjects of the curriculum. Planning for these is very thorough and takes place within a clear framework for the whole school. The curriculum for pupils aged five to 11 years is very well attuned to the interests of girls in this formerly single-sex school. Staff have successfully developed the curriculum to meet the interests of both boys and girls in the Early Years Foundation Stage; they intend to do the same for the rest of the school as it becomes fully co-educational.

The curriculum has recently been developed to have a strong international dimension, and to strengthen further the motivation of pupils by engaging them in topics of intrinsic interest in which they can see clear relevance to their own lives. This is developing well. However, the school has yet to complete a framework within which pupils can be efficiently taught the key knowledge and skills of academic subjects in a progressive way as they move up the school. Currently this means that the curriculum is good overall rather than outstanding; the school is aware of this need and has sound plans to address it in the near future. The provision of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, both on and off site, is exceptionally wide. Pupils have excellent access to these and take up is extensive. This is aided by the specialist skills among the staff. Pupils say how much they enjoy these activities. Both the curriculum and the extra-curricular activities contribute significantly to the progress made by pupils and to their personal development.

The quality of teaching is good overall and in a third of the lessons seen it was outstanding. Teachers are highly effective in passing on to the pupils their enthusiasm for what they teach and this is supported by their very strong subject expertise. This promotes the high levels of enjoyment among pupils. Staff have high expectations for learning, and teaching assistants work well with teachers to help pupils realise these expectations. A very good range of teaching methods is used and this helps keep pupils engaged and 'on their toes'. Questioning is used effectively to stimulate pupils to think and there are plenty of opportunities for them to speak and listen purposefully in lessons. Planning is very thorough and effective, drawing well on a published curriculum scheme, and extending it to create interesting lessons and projects. Although some of the lessons seen were outstandingly well taught, teaching is good overall rather than outstanding; this is because there has not yet been enough time to help all of the staff to further develop their skills to lead the

exceptionally lively and brisk learning which was a feature of the outstanding lessons seen.

Assessment procedures and the precise use of target are excellent throughout the school. Teachers observe pupils closely in the small classes and have a clear idea of how well each of them is doing. Their marking is thorough and consistent and often accompanied by detailed written advice on how to improve. Highly effective use is made of a range of test results to gauge progress. Staff in all classes make good use of clear objectives and targets which are well communicated to pupils to help them understand what they need to do. The teachers' planning is well informed by their exceptionally clear understanding of the achievements and learning needs of individual pupils; this is reflected in the setting of work to meet the specific needs of pupils of differing abilities.

Pupils make outstanding progress. This results partly from the good teaching and curriculum provided, partly from the outstanding ethos of the school, and partly from the strong support which parents give to the school and the high expectations they have for their children. Test results and the success pupils have in securing places at sought-after secondary schools provide ample evidence for this outcome. Staff are highly effective in helping pupils who join Belvedere having reportedly underachieved in their previous schools; the school's detailed assessment data shows clearly that these pupils catch up rapidly and go on to make outstanding progress. The school gives pupils an excellent foundation from which to work for their future economic well-being.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and their behaviour are outstanding. Pupils join the school ready to learn and they have strong parental backing. Their engagement in and enjoyment of education are palpable. This underlies their good attendance rate and their enthusiasm in both lessons and activities around the school. Highly developed procedures for giving rewards and praise for good achievement support the positive attitudes of the pupils. Opportunities are frequently taken to celebrate pupils' work and achievements, in lessons, assemblies and vibrant displays of work.

The curriculum provides ample opportunity for pupils to reflect on their lives and to think about and discuss issues and the beliefs of others; this, and the study of aspects of different religious traditions, contributes significantly to their spiritual development. The school goes to considerable lengths to help pupils develop into caring, tolerant and considerate individuals and to grow in confidence. Staff provide excellent role models and pupils develop considerable respect for both them and each other. They develop a strong sense of what is right and wrong.

The rich curriculum, with its strong international dimension, supports the development of pupils' excellent awareness of different cultures, both here and

overseas; it also contributes considerably to pupils' understanding of some of the key public institutions within our country.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The welfare, health and safety of pupils are outstanding throughout the school, including for the small number of pupils cared for in the after-school club. Pupils' welfare is promoted by the school's pervasive family atmosphere and the caring and diligent work of the staff.

Pupils are provided with excellent knowledge about healthy eating and lifestyles through topic work, school projects and an emphasis on sports and exercise. Pupils are supervised very well both in the building and playground and the school strives to ensure that pupils are safe whilst at school and on outings. Risk assessment is carried out appropriately. Fire drills and safety precautions are in order. Staff are highly effective in securing the outstanding behaviour of pupils and promoting their thoughtful consideration for others and the school's facilities.

The school meets all of the requirements for child protection and two designated members of staff are suitably trained. Parents report overwhelmingly that their children feel safe in school and pupils confirm this. The school fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school complies fully with requirements to check staff on their appointment and maintains a single central register of these checks as required.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The premises are of very high quality, giving spacious, well-organised and ample scope for the pupils to play and learn effectively. Facilities for the specialist activities of art, music, science, sports and technology are outstanding. Classrooms and toilets are in excellent shape and have been recently redecorated to a high standard. The outdoor areas give excellent facilities for play and sport and the school has applied for planning permission further to improve this provision. The premises comply with fire regulations and are surrounded by robust perimeter fencing.

Provision of information

Information is provided regularly and frequently on the school website, by documents and circulars, and orally. The school has very close relationships with

parents and carers. They are highly satisfied with these arrangements, including the provision of very clear information on the progress being made by their children.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has effective and well-published procedures for handling complaints; they meet requirements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding and children make outstanding progress especially in their personal and social development; this is reflected in their excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding.

Outcomes are outstanding. Teaching emphasises developing communication, literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils have access to a wide variety of extra-curricular activities and enjoy frequent outings to places of interest such as China Town and the Science Museum. As a result, children develop a firm foundation for future skills development. Classroom resources are good and pupils make good use of personal computers and interactive whiteboards. Facilities for outdoor play are good. The curriculum is planned well and provides experiences in all of the required areas of learning. It effectively integrates many topics and teachers take every opportunity to 'seize the moment' and help pupils discover different areas of learning within each subject. It has been well adapted to meet the needs of boys as well as girls. The setting has excellent systems in place to record progress and milestones. This ensures consistent assessment which staff use very well to plan learning experiences.

Pupils enjoy the activities available to them and this shows in high levels of engagement. Parents appreciate the high quality of information that they are given about their child's education and the warm atmosphere that pervades the school. The children are very well cared for. They are encouraged to eat healthy foods and take part in 'Health and Safety Walks'. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are outstanding. The leaders of the setting understand and build on its strengths. Safeguarding procedures are robust and meet all of the requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 (‘the Regulations’).³

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- As the school becomes fully co-educational, develop the curriculum for pupils aged between five and 11 years to ensure it meets the needs and interests of boys as well as those of girls.
- Ensure that the coverage of subject knowledge and skills is efficiently sequenced within topics of study to strengthen the progression in pupils’ learning as they move up the school.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made

Inspection judgements

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 pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning	✓			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	✓			
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	✓			
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	✓			
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	✓			

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Preparatory		
Date school opened	30 September 1980		
Age range of pupils	3-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 8	Girls: 91	Total: 99
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 2	Girls: 9	Total: 11
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,895		
Address of school	23 Belvidere Road Princes Park Liverpool Merseyside L8 3TF		
Telephone number	0151 4711137		
Email address	enquiries@belvedereprep.com		
Headteacher	Jane Humble		
Proprietors	Mr William Currie and Mrs Catherine Currie		