

# Benjamin College

Independent special school standard inspection report

---

DfE registration number	825/6042
Unique Reference Number (URN)	135805
Inspection number	361442
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Angela Corbett HMI

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

No. 090070

© Crown copyright 2010



## 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.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## Information about the school

Benjamin College, which opened in 2008, provides secondary education for some students in registered children's homes owned by Benjamin UK Limited. The school was registered in February 2009 and this is the first full inspection covering the education provision in two of the homes where, currently, there are seven young people resident. One of these children's homes was last inspected in August 2010 and the other in September 2010.

The college is registered for eight students aged between 12 and 18 years of age. Currently there is one student on roll but they do not have a statement of special educational needs. Students are funded by their placing local authorities which include London boroughs and counties in the Midlands and south of England. Almost all students placed at the college have a history of academic underachievement as well as social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Students' placement in the college is often for less than half a term because they move into mainstream or other education provision, where possible, or they are no longer resident in either of the homes. However, the education staff often provide learning support and resources for students who live in any of the five children's homes.

The college aims to 'provide a consistent and caring environment in which pupils can develop their full academic, personal and social potential'.

## Evaluation of the school

Benjamin College provides a satisfactory quality of education and successfully meets its stated aims, particularly in helping students to get back into education and prepare for the next steps in their lives at a time when they are experiencing difficulties. The curriculum is satisfactorily tailored to meet students' individual needs and interests; this, together with satisfactory teaching, ensures they make satisfactory progress overall. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall; social and moral development is good as a result of good personal, health and social education and highly effective links between the college and the children's homes. Again close working arrangements with home staff

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

help secure students' welfare, health and safety at all times. However, this provision is satisfactory overall because while practices are strong, these are not always fully reflected in the school policies, a few of which were amended during the inspection to meet requirements. Overall, safeguarding arrangements are secure and the school meets most regulations for registration as an independent school.

## **Quality of education**

The curriculum is satisfactory. Students are assessed on entry to ascertain their personal needs, prior learning, abilities and interests. Almost all are in Years 10 and 11. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is a real strength with well-designed units of work across all subjects each covering around 10 lessons; however, this is less well developed at Key Stage 3. These units enable learning to be highly tailored for each student, regardless of their time in the college. There is a strong emphasis on English, mathematics and science, with the aim that all students will be helped to achieve GCSEs in these subjects. The curriculum is balanced with the provision of art, religious education, physical education and information and communication technology (ICT), thinking skills and personal, social and health education (PSHE). However, there is less provision for practical science and design and technology, although students have been involved in jewellery making and food technology in the children's homes' kitchens. Links are made to students' career aspirations through off-site provision which includes an equine centre and motor vehicle programme. Care staff provide further enhancement through the routine work they do with students and the activities they organise for them, which includes at least one education activity a week. However, while these activities are recorded in the care home, no formal system is in place to monitor these many educational and developmental experiences to provide a cohesive approach to provision.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory. Teachers all have good specialist subject knowledge and tuition is designed to be on a one-to-one basis. On some occasions, care staff join lessons, but then opportunities are missed to promote discussion to broaden students' learning in these lessons. Lessons are well planned and staff use a common planning sheet, which includes clear learning objectives as well as key words and the use of resources. Teachers use praise well and develop students' learning through effective questioning. Teaching approaches and tasks are varied but in some lessons activities are not always set in contexts that are relevant to the students to fully engage them or develop their independence. Good use is made of ICT to enhance learning although slower access to the internet in one classroom impedes maximising its use.

Lesson-by-lesson assessment is thorough and reflects accurately what students have achieved. While students' progress towards their GCSE targets is tracked carefully, this is less well developed in other subjects or for short-term students. Progress varies between students in terms of their personal and academic achievement, but is satisfactory overall. During lessons students receive good verbal feedback on how to

improve but written comments are less consistent so students are not clear on how to improve over time.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

The college makes satisfactory provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Most students who join the college have had a poor and often interrupted prior experience of education. Close and highly effective working practices between the college and residential staff work to successfully improve students' attitudes to learning, raise their self-esteem and improve personal and social skills. Students mostly enjoy college but their enjoyment is dependent on the subject, task or relevance to them of the work. Students' attendance is variable, reflecting their difficulties or readiness to engage in education. Behaviour is satisfactory overall but students are encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour. There are satisfactory opportunities for reflection within different learning topics as well as on events in the wider world. Overall, cultural development is satisfactory, but good use is made of students' own cultural backgrounds with, for example, work on self-identity through black history month activities. The development of social skills is integrated into all lessons as well as through off-site visits, more informal learning opportunities such as art lessons and the well-focused PSHE lessons that also cover knowledge of public services and institutions. This, together with the routine work of the care staff and the activities they organise for the young people out of education time, ensures that moral and social development is good. There are too few opportunities for students to make positive contributions within college and the wider community. Students are exceptionally well supported for the next steps in their learning, either within the college or beyond, through joint work with the care staff, including exploring career options, meetings with Connexions staff both locally and in their placing authorities, college visits and the completion of application forms.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

The provision for ensuring students' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. Strong systems, all in close conjunction with the care home, promote students' welfare, health and safety. Policies are mainly derived from those in the care home, and in some instances do not place sufficient emphasis on education. The very positive approach taken to managing behaviour called 'positive handling' is underpinned by a clear system of sanctions which are linked to a loss of rewards. Behaviour in the classrooms is monitored and information is shared with the residential staff. Risk assessments for activities both in and outside college meet requirements and a new and appropriate educational visits policy is now in place. Child protection policies and procedures are in place and are linked to that of the care home. The arrangements for fire prevention overall are adequate. Students are developing a good understanding of how to stay safe, including the use of new technologies, and how to live a healthy lifestyle. This is supported well by the home staff, for example through twice-weekly sporting or leisure activities. The policy for first aid is in place

and fully trained care staff are called on when needed and all accidents are recorded in the care home log. Admission and attendance registers do not comply with the regulations. There is no admission register in place and only the attendance of long-term students is recorded. There is a suitable and recently drafted three-year action plan indicating how the school will fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

### **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

The college has checked the suitability of all staff and the proprietors to work with children and has in place secure and rigorous appointment procedures. The single central register shows all the required information although it was amended during the inspection to show the dates of criminal records bureau checks for all staff, with a column for the right-to-work checks and that further checks for staff from overseas had been undertaken.

### **Premises of and accommodation at the school**

Classrooms are each located within the premises of two children's homes. One classroom has not been used for almost a year but is reasonably well decorated and is ready for teaching when the need next arises. The other has been moved from its location in the conservatory at the time of the registration visit to a close, but separate, converted garage. The lighting, heating and ventilation in this room are poor. This classroom is small and it is not appropriate for teaching four students at one time, although most tuition is on a one-to-one basis. There is also access to kitchens at both houses which are used for activities related to cookery or art and for meal times. Overall, there is sufficient space for four students to be taught effectively at each home through the use of lounges, kitchens and, on one site, the conservatory. There is some space at both houses for recreational purposes, although these are quite small. There are some inadequate security arrangements.

### **Provision of information**

The college provides most of the required information about the education provision for parents, carers and others through its prospectus, the student handbook and the Benjamin UK website. However, this falls short of meeting the full requirements, with some policy omissions, such as giving no details on complaints in the last 12 months and a list of staff with a summary of their qualifications. Half-termly reports provide a good amount of detail on how well students are making progress and formal meetings with care staff and social workers, when needed, also help to further tailor the education provision or inform 'pathway' plans for students moving into post-16 education or beyond.

## **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The college has an appropriate and clear complaints policy; however, it is only made available on request and is not published to parents and carers in line with the regulations.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.<sup>3</sup>

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standards in part 3) and must:

- maintain admission and attendance registers in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 17).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises of and accommodation at schools (standards in part 5) and must:

- ensure that there are adequate security arrangements in place for the grounds and buildings (paragraph 23(d))
- improve the lighting, heating and ventilation in the classrooms (paragraph 23(o)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- provide the following information to parents of students and parents of prospective students:
  - particulars of educational and welfare provision for students who speak English as an additional language
  - particulars of the arrangements for tackling bullying, and for promoting students' health and safety on the school premises and on educational visits as required under part 3 paragraphs 10, 11 and 12
  - particulars of policies relating to bullying, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour, and sanctions adopted in the event of students misbehaving as required under part 3, paragraph 9
  - details of the complaints procedure adopted by the school, together with details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year
  - the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 24(1)(b))

---

<sup>3</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made)

- publish on its website or, where no such website exists, send to parents of students (and of prospective students on request) a copy of its safeguarding children policy as required under part 3, paragraph 7 (paragraph 24(1)(c)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the manner in which complaints are to be handled (standards in part 7) and must:

- make the complaints procedure available to parents (paragraph 25 (b)).

Please see the report on Ofsted's website relating to the care provision in the children's home which should be read in conjunction with this report.

## **What the school could do to improve further**

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

- develop the Key Stage 3 curriculum with modular units of learning, in line with those already developed at Key Stage 4
- provide opportunities for students to make a positive contribution both to the life of the college and also to the wider community
- take a more cohesive approach to the young people's education by more formally linking the learning that takes place in the college and the homes.



## Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
-------------	------	--------------	------------

### 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			✓	
--	--	--	---	--

## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Residential Special School		
<b>Date school opened</b>	2008		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	12–18		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
<b>Number of boarders</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	£19,500 (for education provision only)		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01296 483584		
<b>Email address</b>	office@benjamincollege.co.uk		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Jeremy Yelland		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mrs Claudette Deysel		