

# Belmont School

Independent school standard inspection report

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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.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## **Information about the school**

Belmont School is an independent day special school for boys aged from seven to 18 years who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Some pupils have additional specific learning needs. All pupils have a statement of educational needs. There are currently 104 pupils on roll. Of these, 16 are in the junior school and two students are aged over 16 years of age. Pupils from 20 different local authorities are placed at the school. Nearly one third of pupils are children who are 'looked after'.

The school opened as a senior school in 1996 and a second site 'Belmont at Cloughfold' opened in September 2010 for boys aged from seven to 11 years, with an adjacent vocational centre for use by the whole school. The sites are two miles apart in Rawtenstall in Lancashire. The first students aged over 16 years were admitted in September 2011. The school is one of the schools in the Acorn Care and Education group.

The school's vision is that 'every pupil should achieve his potential and develop an understanding of and respect for himself and others.' The school was previously inspected in September 2008.

## **Evaluation of the school**

The quality of education is outstanding. All aspects of school life and provision are outstanding. The school meets all the regulations for independent schools and has made good improvement since its previous inspection. Arrangements for safeguarding are robust and meet all the requirements. The school is highly successful in meeting its aims. With vigour, determination and enthusiasm the headteacher and staff transform the lives of their pupils, removing barriers to learning and enabling pupils to achieve outstandingly well from their low starting points. The school evaluates its work continually, always seeking to improve still further. Pupils leave school exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their lives.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

## Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding. It meets pupils' needs exceptionally well and is a major factor in pupils' excellent attitudes to learning. The curriculum is broad and balanced and based on the National Curriculum, with an appropriately strong focus on developing pupils' skills in English and mathematics. In Key Stage 2, boys benefit from a 'nurture group' approach. This provides a highly positive start to the day and helps pupils to develop good listening skills and outstanding empathy. In Key Stage 3, pupils study English, mathematics and science, and follow courses in art, music, craft and design, information and communication technology (ICT), religious education, physical education (PE), personal, social and health education (PSHE) and humanities. At Key Stage 4, the school offers a good range of GCSE subjects, vocational courses and accreditation at Entry Level.

The curriculum has improved markedly since the previous inspection in the range and the increasingly challenging levels of qualifications pupils are able to gain. Pupils make very good progress in literacy and numeracy skills, applying them with increasing confidence across subjects. An interesting range of outdoor and physical pursuits builds up pupils' skills in working collaboratively in teams and in solving problems. Careers advice is highly effective. All pupils in Year 11 undertake work placements tailored to their interests and aptitudes, often securing places on related courses at college when they leave.

The range of vocational courses has increased. Pupils on both sites participate in horticulture. All pupils in the senior school attend the vocational centre for one session each week and many attend further sessions. There are two workshops with a good range of machine and other tools for engineering, construction and motor vehicle maintenance. Under careful supervision, pupils develop useful skills, such as casting metal, operating a lathe and carpentry. All pupils in Key Stage 4 also follow 'taster courses' in further vocational areas at a local college. Pupils enjoy these courses, commenting on their relevance to future employment, but are keen also to succeed in academic subjects. The PSHE course develops pupils' understanding of sensitive issues they will face in their future lives. Pupils develop skills to help keep themselves safe, such as how to deal effectively with peer pressure.

Teaching and assessment are outstanding. Teachers encourage and build self-esteem so that pupils are very keen to learn. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use a wide range of highly effective strategies to promote learning. A wide variety of tasks and hands-on practical activities encourages pupils' engagement. Resources for learning are excellent. Teaching only rarely falls below good in quality: very occasionally, learning outcomes are not clear enough or a few pupils are not challenged sufficiently. Activities are tailored very closely to individual needs. For example, in a Key Stage 2 literacy lesson, pupils writing an imaginary diary had sheets to support them with prompts graded to reflect each pupil's level of writing skills. Pupils work very well independently, concentrating for long periods without demanding continual assistance from the teacher, trying first to resolve their own difficulties. Teachers give well-targeted advice as to how to improve work.

Students make at least good progress in all lessons, steadily making small steps in extending or reinforcing their learning. Consequently, from their low starting points pupils' progress over time is outstanding. Pupils successfully fill in gaps in their learning and catch up to where they should be.

By the end of Key Stage 2, younger pupils have also made excellent progress. A very good start is made in developing basic skills in numeracy. Progress in English is similar. However, there is no whole-school strategy for developing literacy across the primary section of the school. The school recognises this shortcoming and has taken steps recently to address it.

Pupils make rapid progress in Key Stage 3 in improving their basic skills in English and mathematics. By the time they leave school, pupils are once again making progress in line with national expectations and many reach broadly average standards. The attainment of a minority of pupils is above average in one or more GCSE subjects. All pupils leave school with accreditation for their learning. In 2011, on average, pupils obtained qualifications in seven subjects. All continued in education, or gained employment. Pupils who are 'looked after' make progress in line with their peers. Pupils aged over 16 years follow a highly-personalised curriculum, comprising both academic and vocational courses and make progress in line with their targets. They contribute to school life in ways that reflect their increasing maturity, for example, as a mentor to younger pupils.

The analysis and use of assessment data are now excellent. The school tracks pupils' progress in academic subjects and personal development closely, comparing this to national expectations. Pupils review their progress with staff, agreeing targets for academic and personal development. Data is presented to pupils visually, in graphs, to encourage their involvement. Support is provided if pupils fall behind or alternative courses are sought to better meet their needs. Teachers use assessment information well when planning lessons. They consider pupils' personal and additional learning needs and suitable strategies to adopt. Consequently, lessons successfully move learning on very well for each pupil. Teachers check learning carefully throughout lessons and in regular tests. Pupils' work is marked regularly, with helpful comments. These highly effective strategies for assessment contribute substantially to the high levels of engagement in learning.

Parents and carers are, justifiably, very happy with the education their children receive. A very small minority are less satisfied with the provision for homework. Inspectors can reassure them that their children work very hard at school. Where homework is necessary the school arranges for it to be given, including providing advice through the website.

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

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding. Parents and carers are delighted with the transformation in their children's behaviour.

'Belmont is the only school that has made my son happy'; 'He has the chance of obtaining some GCSEs, something three to four years ago I would never have thought possible' were typical comments on the questionnaires received. The school builds pupils' self-esteem exceptionally well so that pupils grow more confident and believe that they can succeed.

Behaviour is outstanding. The need for restraint or exclusion has reduced significantly as the school population has stabilised. Pupils successfully learn to take responsibility for their own behaviour. They are clear about rules, rewards and sanctions. The reward system operates very effectively. Sanctions are rarely needed and a verbal warning often suffices. If behaviour falls short, this is highly effectively managed. Staff set clear boundaries and have high expectations. They model well the behaviour they seek. Excellent relationships between staff and pupils and amongst pupils lead to a warm, productive atmosphere for learning.

Every opportunity is taken to foster social skills, for example, by eating together at breakfast and lunchtime, with pupils taking turns to help with serving and clearing up. Religious education and PSHE lessons, assemblies and visits out of school promote an understanding of other communities and their needs. In these ways, the school fosters tolerance and understanding about other cultures and religions, and about wider aspects of life in England. Respect for oneself and for others is a clear moral message understood by pupils. Pupils show good awareness about bullying and say that very little occurs; any 'banter' that gets out of hand is swiftly dealt with. Pupils comment on how dramatically their own behaviour has changed. Attendance at school has improved and now matches the national average. A good number of pupils have high or full attendance, reflecting their desire to succeed.

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

Arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of the students are outstanding. Small classes, clear routines and excellent relationships help to keep pupils safe. Pupils are carefully, but not obtrusively, supervised. The school provides excellent care and keeps careful records. Safeguarding procedures are robust; policies are reviewed regularly, are implemented effectively and training for child protection is up to date. Liaison with outside agencies, professionals and families is very well managed. Staff in school work together highly effectively to support pupils, helping them to overcome significant barriers to learning. The policy for first aid is implemented efficiently and training for first aid is up to date. Appropriate steps are taken to minimise risks, including for the prevention of fire. The school fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Pupils' physical and emotional health are accorded a high priority. Good attention is paid to helping pupils to develop healthy eating habits. Pupils have many opportunities to engage in physical activities and have regular contact with a school counsellor. Pupils value this highly.

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

The school meets all the requirements. It maintains a single, central register of its staff as required. Staff are subject to an enhanced check with the Criminal Records Bureau to check their suitability to work with children.

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

The premises are highly suitable and provide a very attractive environment for learning. They are well maintained, with spacious classrooms. The senior school is based in an historic house, with an additional classroom block. The junior school building is a former maintained primary school, with a new vocational unit adjacent. The senior site has a good range of specialist facilities including rooms for ICT, science, design and technology, art and music; a small gymnasium; a dining room and a games room. There are gardens for horticulture and suitable playgrounds, used also for games and outdoor physical education. The school complements these facilities by regularly using a local sports centre.

## **Provision of information**

The school provides all the information required. An attractive school prospectus and a website provide clear, accurate information for parents, carers and others. Information on pupils' progress is much better than at the time of the previous inspection.

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

The school's procedures meet all 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').

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

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

- devise and implement an effective strategy for the promotion of literacy in the junior school to further help remove barriers to learning.

## 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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## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Special school for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties		
<b>Date school opened</b>	September 1996		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7-18		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 108	Girls: 0	Total: 108
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 108	Girls: 0	Total: 108
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 32	Girls: 0	Total: 32
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£29,993		
<b>Address of school</b>	Haslingden Road Rawtenstall Rossendale Lancashire BB4 6RX		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01706 221043		
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@belmont-school.co.uk">admin@belmont-school.co.uk</a>		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Mike Stobart		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Acorn Care and Education		

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



1 March 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Belmont School, Rawtenstall, BB4 6RX**

I am writing to thank you for all your help when I came with Mrs Hewitt recently to inspect your school, and to tell you what we found. It was really interesting and helpful to talk to you.

We agree with you and your parents and carers: the quality of education at Belmont school is outstanding. We were really impressed with what you told us, especially how much you felt your behaviour had improved, how you felt safe and how keen you were to succeed. We think you work very hard and we can see how quickly you are making progress and catching up to where you should be. All the boys who left school at the end of Year 11 last summer went on to college or got a job and two stayed on at Belmont. That is a tremendous achievement and one you can all be rightly proud of. It shows what each of you can do, if you really believe you can.

We were pleased to see the number of practical subjects you now do at school, in the new vocational centre and at college, and you told us how useful you feel this is for your future life. We agree. The school meets all the regulations that apply to independent schools. All aspects of school life are outstanding: the curriculum (subjects and activities you can do); teaching and assessment; your progress; your personal development and the arrangements the school makes for your care, well-being and safety. Your behaviour in lessons and around school is excellent; you take an active part in your lessons, concentrate well and try hard. Well done!

A few parents and carers in their replies to the questionnaires thought you could be getting more homework. We think you work really hard and so need a break at the end of the school day. We know that the school can provide extra help or advice if you feel you need it, and you just need to ask, or look at the website.

We think that the school does a super job and has made good improvement since its last inspection. We have suggested that the junior school might to look at how best to organise your reading, and writing. They are already getting on with this.

Yours sincerely

Honoree Gordon  
Her Majesty's Inspector