

# Belgrave School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Jonathan Palk HMI

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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**

Belgrave School is a small independent, mixed, day special school for students aged between six and 16 years with dyslexia and related learning difficulties. The school was opened in 1993 by the present proprietor and is located in a large Victorian house in Clifton overlooking Bristol Downs. The school works closely with the Bristol Dyslexia centre, also owned by the proprietor, sharing staff training, teaching expertise and resources as and when required. The school currently provides full-time education for 40 students. Fifteen students have a statement of special educational needs and several travel significant distances each day to attend. The school aims to encourage students to enjoy school by restoring their self-confidence and self-esteem; to develop self-reliance by improving reading, writing, spelling and numeracy skills, so enabling them to realise their full potential. It is hoped to bring the students' academic skills to a level of attainment that will allow them to happily and confidently return to mainstream education.

The school was last inspected in February 2009. Since then the school has expanded to include secondary schooling for students up to 16 years of age. The headteacher took up post in September 2011 and almost all the staff have been in post under a year. The proprietors requested a material change to increase numbers to 40 students with immediate effect. This inspection considered the viability of this request.

## **Evaluation of the school**

Belgrave School provides a satisfactory quality of education. A satisfactory curriculum, supported by satisfactory teaching and assessment, results in students making satisfactory progress. The good quality of welfare, health and safety of students, including for safeguarding, and the good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensure that students make good progress in their personal development. The school now meets all but one of the regulations, which is an improvement on the last inspection.

Approval is recommended for an increase in registration to 40 students, as requested by the school.

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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 satisfactory. However, good provision is made for students to develop their reading and spelling skills. There are many opportunities, both planned and spontaneous, for students to acquire personal and social skills that stand them in good stead for the future. This year, for the first time, the school is offering GCSE subjects, including English language, English literature, mathematics, science, information and communication technology and art to meet the needs of students who have joined the school in Year 10 and because of the availability of teachers. The school follows the syllabi of accredited examination boards including the AQA board and the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) courses. The GCSE coursework is appropriately adjusted and modified for students in Year 9 in order to meet their specific needs.

The schemes of work for Key Stages 2 and 3 are satisfactory. They are based on National Curriculum guidance and are taught using themes, challenges and activities that seek to develop a broad range of skills. The school is in the process of revising all schemes of work to define more precisely how planning and assessment are to be structured in order to accelerate students' learning and progress. At present there is a lack of sufficient curriculum cohesion that ensures literacy and numeracy skills are developed systematically through other subjects and to ensure there is an even coverage of skills taught in creative subjects, such as music and design and technology. Expectations for the development of handwriting skills are not implemented consistently. Provision for physical education is adequate. Despite the limitations of the outside space, the school has complemented the provision in school with a programme of skills and games at nearby sports centres. The curriculum is planned thoughtfully to ensure an appropriate balance between core educational activities and therapy, ensuring students' progress in line with the expectations of their individual education plans. Opportunities for independent learning are strengthened through the use of specialist computer programmes and a daily activity hour where students work on a personalised curriculum that develops coordination, problem solving and reasoning skills. Students' learning is suitably enriched through local visits and cultural experiences in Bristol and London.

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory and students make satisfactory progress over time. Lessons are organised well by teachers to ensure that the short attention span of the students improves. Routines are clear and rehearsed with students to reduce any anxiety. Relationships with the teachers are extremely positive and students are always keen to contribute to lessons which all contain a practical element to help focus learning and make it more enjoyable. Clear introductions to the lessons are a consistent feature in which the purpose of the learning is made clear. Teachers are aware of the gaps in students' prior learning but do not always seek to address these learning gaps in a systematic and coherent way, particularly in Years 4 to 9. In part this is because lesson planning does not always identify each individual student's 'next steps' well, even though staff are aware of what each student is capable of. It is also because not all of the schemes of work set out

precisely the progression of skills to be acquired which should then inform teaching and learning.

The small numbers in each class ensure that one-to-one support is always available. This help is effective and carried out in such a way as to encourage students' independence. Helpful direction is given which ensures students remain on task and generally achieve the lesson objectives. In good lessons teachers exemplified and shared with the students what high-quality work looks like, but in other lessons such opportunities were missed. In some lessons the pace of learning slows and the teaching does not ensure students learn at a good rate. Where skills are taught with close attention to the next steps, as in the lessons for those following accredited GCSE courses, progress is often good.

The strategy for assessing academic achievement and tracking progress is being reviewed. There is a well-established system of regular testing that serves to measure progress in the acquisition of a range of skills, which meets the requirements of those students with a statement of special educational needs. However, the process does not capture well the small gains in progress across a wider range of skills, particularly in writing, numeracy and investigative skills. The headteacher has implemented a system whereby students are encouraged to reflect on where they consider they are achieving well and where they require extra support. This is working well for those students who spoke to the inspector, with one saying, 'I really understand what I am now learning.' Additional lessons or alterations within lessons are made to ensure students have the necessary basic skills for the next stage of their education or employment. Assessment information is regularly shared with parents and carers and is being used to help students make the suitable choices for their post-16 education.

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

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In the words of one parent/carer, 'Since my son joined Belgrave his enthusiasm for school and his confidence in his own ability has hugely increased.' This is not untypical of parents' and carers' comments and they are unanimous that the school's positive ethos is at the heart of students' good personal development.

The school is very inclusive and ensures all students are made to feel welcome and are encouraged to achieve. One student on their questionnaire summed up this matter with the words, 'I like that it is relaxed and supportive. I like it because everyone respects each other and helps each other.' Attendance is satisfactory and students agree that they like school. Students respect and value each other and understand some of the difficulties each person faces and their specific needs. This feature is borne out in the highly successful partnership working in putting together the school magazine and the positive attitude demonstrated, for example, in taking turns in lessons. Students' behaviour is good. The system of rewards and sanctions works well to help students manage any frustrations they may experience. The personal, social and health education programme reinforces students' self-confidence

and understanding of how to lead a safe and healthy lifestyle. Through the ASDAN programme, students are gaining a good appreciation and understanding of people from other cultures and an awareness of local issues. They participate in local community events and play their part in fundraising for the school. Students contribute fully to the life of the school and become more socially aware, for example when they celebrate each other's successes, or take part in the school council.

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

Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good. The school is thorough in ensuring that all regulations for this standard are now fully met. All of the required child protection training has been undertaken, at the appropriate level, to ensure students are safe and are well cared for. Appropriate safer recruitment procedures are in place, as are the policies for fire safety and first aid, health and safety, behaviour and anti-bullying. Responsibilities are distributed effectively for ensuring the safety of students while on the school site and when undertaking visits off site. Supervision of students at playtimes and lunchtime is good. Procedures are implemented effectively as are risk assessments. Students indicate that they are free from harassment and are well cared for. Parents and carers agree and value the information they get from specialist staff at the school which helps to extend their understanding of how best to meet their child's particular needs. The school fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

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

All the required safeguarding checks on staff are made, including Criminal Records Bureau checks. All are recorded appropriately in a single central register.

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

The premises and accommodation are satisfactory for the numbers of students currently registered, and for the increased number requested. The premises are in good decorative order and the learning environment suitably supports students' academic and social development. There is sufficient outdoor space for play and recreation. Following the re-modelling of the building to accommodate five classes, the medical room was sited in a room which is also designated for sensory activity and as a library. This is not an appropriate provision for any student who is unwell.

## **Provision of information**

The school provides, or makes available, all of the required information for parents, carers and others. Parents and carers agree that they are provided with clear, accurate and up-to-date information about their child's attainment and progress.

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

The complaints procedure meets regulatory 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'), with the exception of those listed below.<sup>3</sup>

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

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, in accordance with regulation 5 of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 23(k)).

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

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

- complete the mapping of subject provision in Key Stages 2 and 3 to ensure that planning identifies clearly the skills and knowledge to be taught and there is greater cohesion within the curriculum
- develop assessment procedures, so that students' academic progress can be tracked more precisely
- use the assessment information gained on students' academic progress more regularly, especially in Years 4 to 9, to address more effectively gaps in their learning.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made](http://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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## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent day		
<b>Type of school</b>	Special		
<b>Date school opened</b>	1993		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	6 to 16 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 29	Girls: 11	Total: 40
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 10	Girls: 5	Total: 15
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	Range £6,900 - 7,500		
<b>Address of school</b>	10 Upper Belgrave Rd, Clifton, Bristol. BS8 2XH		
<b>Telephone number</b>	0117 974 3133		
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:info@belgrave-school.org">info@belgrave-school.org</a>		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Deborah Redding		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mrs Pat Jones		

**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.**



21 June 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Belgrave School, Bristol BS8 2XH**

Thank you for welcoming me to your school. I enjoyed meeting you. I appreciated the fact that you were prepared to talk with me and tell me what you thought about school life. I found the school to be providing you with a satisfactory education, with some aspects being good. I have listed my findings below.

- You are growing in confidence because you feel safe and are looked after well.
- You show a great deal of respect for each other and think about the feelings of others. Consequently, your behaviour is good and you are enjoying school.
- Your parents and carers are very pleased with the work of the school and how it helps you to succeed. The good support you get to help you overcome your learning difficulties helps you develop a good capacity to tackle and solve problems for yourselves. These skills will help you make the best of your future lives.
- Some aspects of your curriculum are good and there is a broad offer for those studying for GCSEs.
- Overall your academic progress is satisfactory.

I have asked the school do a few things to help speed up your progress.

- To plan more carefully what skills and knowledge you are going to be taught as you move through the school.
- To gain a better picture of how you are making progress in a wider range of skills.
- To make sure teaching in all lessons takes account of, and records, the small steps needed to help you reach your goals.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Palk  
Her Majesty's Inspector