

Buckholme Towers School

18 Commercial Road, Poole, BH14 0JW

Inspection dates

8–10 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- The school is led well by the headteacher and other senior teachers. They have a good understanding of the school and set high expectations for teachers and pupils.
- Teaching is good, with teachers knowing their pupils well and plan lessons that match their abilities.
- Pupils make good progress and leave the school with high attainment in both English and mathematics.
- Pupils feel safe in school because behaviour is good and there are good procedures to look after pupils' welfare, health and safety.
- The subjects that pupils are taught contribute to their good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The various after-school sporting and creative activities are effective in developing their all-round personal skills.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Teaching is not consistently outstanding because the quality of marking varies from class to class and sometimes teachers do not fully use teaching assistants to support pupils' learning at the beginning of lessons.
- Opportunities are missed by some senior leaders to help teachers further improve the quality of their lessons.
- Opportunities are missed to challenge more-able pupils' writing in Key Stage 2. This is why achievement overall is not outstanding.
- There are four failures in meeting the independent school regulations as a result of the school having to use temporary accommodation following a fire.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school requires improvement and must take action to meet schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amended) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amended) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Information about this inspection

- The school was told about the inspection the day before inspectors visited the school.
- Inspectors visited 26 lessons and part lessons and observed nine teachers. A number of pupils were heard reading and inspectors examined samples of pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior staff, the proprietors of the school and a group of pupils. School improvement plans and policies on teaching, the curriculum, health and safety and the safeguarding and welfare of pupils were scrutinized.
- Responses from 31 parents and carers who completed the Parent View survey on the Ofsted website were analysed.

Inspection team

James Henry, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Helen Griffiths

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Buckholme Towers is a co-educational, independent day school that is registered for 129 pupils aged from three to 12 years of age. Currently there are 108 pupils on roll, including 15 who attend part time. It was founded in 1939 on the same site, a large Victorian house, which has been adapted for use as a school.
- There are a few pupils with special educational needs but none has a statement. There is a small number of disabled pupils.
- The school aims to 'provide a caring and supportive atmosphere with children happy and secure and ready for the challenges of school life'.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a Nursery and Reception class and the school follows the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum.
- The school building has very recently been seriously damaged by fire. While the school building is being repaired and re-built, pupils are being taught in temporary classrooms in the playground and in premises owned by a local church adjacent to the school.
- The school was last inspected in October 2009. It does not make any additional provision for its pupils.
- There is a separate Nursery on the church premises that is not managed by the proprietors of Buckholme Towers and was not part of this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is outstanding by ensuring:
 - a consistent approach to marking and plan more opportunities in future lessons for pupils to respond to the guidance given by teachers
 - all senior leaders regularly observe teaching in order to share good practice and provide effective feedback to help teachers improve their lessons
 - teachers make full use of teaching assistants to support pupils' learning at the beginning of lessons.
- Increase the rate at which pupils, especially the more able, make progress in writing across Key Stage 2 by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in other subjects
 - ensuring more consistent opportunities for pupils to judge the quality of their own writing in order to identify how they could improve it further.
- **The school must meet the following independent school standards.**
 - Ensure that suitable changing accommodation and showers are provided for pupils aged 11 years or over at the start of the school year who receive physical education (paragraph 23A(1)(c)).
 - Provide accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils (paragraph 23B(1)(a)).
 - Ensure that suitable drinking water facilities are provided and that these are readily accessible at all times when the premises are in use and are in a separate area from toilet facilities (paragraph 23F(1)(a)).
 - Ensure that cold water supplies that are suitable for drinking are clearly marked as such (paragraph 23F(1)(c)).

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Pupils' achievement is good and all groups make at least good progress across the school in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress is especially strong in reading and mathematics. Although the progress in writing of more-able pupils in Key Stage 2 is good, opportunities are missed to challenge them more. This is why achievement overall is not outstanding.

Children enter the Nursery with skills and abilities that are broadly expected for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, including developing their early reading, writing and counting skills. As they grow older, pupils continue to make good progress in the different year groups because of good teaching in a well-balanced range of subjects. Progress in reading for all groups of pupils is particularly good because the school has an effective system for teaching reading skills that is applied consistently, especially in Years 1 and 2.

Pupils take the national tests in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 6. Results over time show that pupils leave the school with attainment that is consistently above or well above the national average in English and mathematics. As a result, many pupils are successful in obtaining places at local grammar schools. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because they are supported well in lessons. The school is successful in improving the achievement of these groups of pupils. Over time, almost all of these pupils attain good standards in English and mathematics in national tests in Year 6.

Almost all of the parents and carers who responded to the Parent View survey on the Ofsted website felt that their child is making good progress.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Pupils' behaviour and personal development are good because the school effectively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and meets its aim of ensuring pupils feel happy and secure. This is achieved through a wide variety of activities and links with local organisations. For example, assemblies are based on moral and social themes such as 'friendship' and celebrate individual achievements both in and out of school. This helps to develop pupils' self-esteem and promote positive attitudes towards others who may be different from themselves. Sporting and creative activities such as football, rounders and music help to develop pupils' self-confidence and social awareness. For example, the school choir and orchestra perform for residents at the local sheltered housing association.

The school has strong links with the local United Reform Church that helps to promote pupils' spiritual development. Pupils visit different places of worship such as the local synagogue and mosque to foster their understanding of other cultures and faiths and to prepare them for life in a multicultural society. Pupils are helped to understand about different public institutions and how a democratic society works. For example, elections are held where pupils vote to elect a school council to represent their views on school life. The school ensures that where political issues are considered, steps have been taken to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views.

Behaviour is good, with disruption to learning in lessons rare. There are effective procedures to manage pupils' behaviour. There is a strong emphasis on rewarding pupils' good behaviour, for example through merit awards for good listening, with pupils responding well to both praise and correction if necessary. Relationships are good and pupils have positive attitudes towards school and are keen to learn. Attendance is good, with most pupils punctual for school. The parents and carers who responded to the Parent View survey on the Ofsted website were unanimous in feeling that the school makes sure pupils are well behaved.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development are not outstanding because behaviour is not exemplary. For example, pupils can sometimes be noisy at the beginning and end of assemblies and their attention can wander in lessons if not reminded by adults about listening.

Quality of teaching

Good

The quality of teaching is good, with teachers planning activities in lessons that match different pupils' abilities. As a result, all groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, make good progress. Almost all the parents and carers who responded to the Parent View survey on the Ofsted website felt that their child was taught well.

Teachers regularly test pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills to measure their progress against the different levels in the National Curriculum. Results are used to assess pupils' progress over time and inform teachers if any pupils need extra support to help them catch up with their peers. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly with comments about how well pupils achieve in lessons. However, marking varies in quality from class to class, with some opportunities missed, particularly in writing, for pupils to assess their own work and have the opportunity to improve further. This applies to all pupils but especially the more able in Key Stage 2.

Teachers use skilful question-and-answer techniques to engage pupils and challenge their thinking. For example, in Year 7, pupils were working well together to put planets in order according to their distance from the sun using different-sized balls, with the teacher skilfully questioning their reasoning.

For the most part, teaching assistants are used effectively to support pupils learning, particularly disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, during activities in lessons. However, there are a very few occasions when they are not fully used at the beginning of lessons, especially when teachers are explaining activities to different groups of pupils.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The quality of the curriculum is good and so has a positive effect on pupils' learning and achievement. Pupils are taught a well-balanced range of subjects based on the National Curriculum. There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills. This focus enables pupils to access research and reading material in order to develop their knowledge and understanding in other subjects. As a result, they make good progress in their learning over time. The school has begun to re-organise the curriculum to link different subjects together to make learning more meaningful for pupils. However, there is not a coherent approach to ensuring that pupils, especially the more able in Key Stage 2, have consistent opportunities to practise their basic skills, particularly in writing, in different subjects.

The school enhances the curriculum through different activities. For example, residential visits to a local outdoor adventure centre, visiting speakers and themed days such as 'French' and 'Technology' days engage pupils in learning and add to their enjoyment of school.

The curriculum in The Early Year Foundation Stage is good and meets requirements, with all the areas of learning being covered. There is a good balance between adult-led sessions, such as teaching children basic sounds to develop their early reading skills, and children learning through choosing their own activities.

There is a wide range of activities offered to pupils by the school outside of school hours. These include sports such as football, rugby and sailing and creative activities such as music, drama and art, which means that the curriculum effectively promotes pupils' personal development as well as their academic achievement.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety**Good**

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good and the school meets all the independent school welfare, health and safety regulations. There are robust procedures to safeguard pupils. Staff are fully vetted to ensure they are suitable to work in school and undertake appropriate child protection training that helps them monitor pupils' safety in school. All necessary checks are recorded in a single central register. The school has a full set of policies, including those for child protection, behaviour, anti-bullying, health and safety and first aid. They are clear and enforced. Pupils are well supervised. The school has an appropriate number of first-aiders, including those qualified in paediatric care.

All the parents and carers who responded to the Parent View on the Ofsted website felt that their child was safe at school and almost all felt that the school dealt effectively with bullying. Pupils say that they have never experienced bullying in school. The school is part of a local 'Safer School and Community' initiative that helps to ensure pupils understand and deal with bullying, particularly cyber-bullying.

With the need to provide temporary accommodation, the school has successfully undertaken all the required risk assessments, including making sure fire regulations are met, to ensure the school environment is safe and secure. There are effective risk assessments for visits outside school. Staff know pupils well and the school provides a good level of pastoral care, including providing short-term facilities for pupils who are ill or may have had an accident.

Leadership and management**Good**

Leadership and management are good because the headteacher and other senior staff know the school well and have high expectations. Consequently, they have a clear understanding of where the school needs to improve and produce and carry out action plans to bring about further improvements. For example, the newly established senior leadership team is working on developing links between different subjects in the curriculum.

The headteacher regularly monitors the quality of teaching and learning in lessons. As a result, over a sustained period of time, pupils' attainment has been above the national average in both English and mathematics. One weakness, however, is that not all senior leaders formally undertake lesson observations. Consequently, a few opportunities are missed for senior staff to provide effective feedback to teachers and share good practice. The headteacher, supported by all the staff, has worked effectively to ensure the school continues to function well despite the recent fire in the school building. This is reflected in the school continuing to meet almost all of the independent school regulations.

While the temporary premises and accommodation are mostly suitable for purpose, there are some regulatory failures relating to the temporary absence of showers, water and medical facilities. All the regulations regarding the quality of information for parents and carers and the procedure for handling complaints are met. All the parents and carers who responded to the Parent View survey on the Ofsted website felt that the school was well led and managed.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	113930
Inspection number	408712
DfE registration number	836/6004

This inspection was carried out 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.

Type of school	Co-educational day school
School status	Independent
Age range of pupils	3–12 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	108
Number of part time pupils	15
Proprietors	Iain Robertson; Eric Bosence
Headteacher	Iain Robertson
Date of previous school inspection	20 October 2009
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,100
Telephone number	01202 742871
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