

Buckholme Towers School

18 Commercial Road, Parkstone, Poole, Dorset BH14 0JW

Inspection dates

16–18 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not tackled the areas identified as requiring improvement at the time of the previous inspection quickly enough.
- Leaders' views on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are overgenerous. Insufficient attention is given to the impact that teaching has on the progress pupils and groups of pupils make.
- Development plans do not identify accurately what needs to improve. The plans do not identify who is responsible for checking the effectiveness of actions taken in raising pupil progress, or when this is to be done.
- Pupils' attainment is above national standards in reading, writing and mathematics. However, leaders do not check with enough rigour the progress pupils are making across a wide range of subjects.
- Subject leaders do not have sufficient development opportunities or time to monitor their subjects effectively. As a result, they do not know how well pupils are achieving.
- Teaching is not consistently good across subjects and classes.
- Teachers do not plan activities that consistently challenge pupils, especially the most able. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough to ensure that pupils make good progress.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to apply their writing and mathematical skills in other subjects, thus hampering their progress.
- Teachers do not consistently provide pupils with enough support or advice about their work. Consequently, pupils are unsure how to improve.

The school has the following strengths

- Behaviour is good. Pupils are extremely polite, courteous and well mannered.
- Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of what it means to live in modern Britain.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are good. This enables pupils to feel safe and nurtured. They enjoy school and attend regularly.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders' monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning includes a clear focus on the impact it has on outcomes for different groups of pupils
 - leaders and proprietors check that development plans identify accurately what needs to improve, and when, and by who, checks will be made to determine whether the actions taken have been successful in improving pupil outcomes
 - tracking systems provide leaders and teachers with detailed information on what pupils know, can do and understand in order to inform planning so that learning is sufficiently challenging for all pupils, especially the most able
 - leaders implement a robust, structured programme of training and support to equip subject leaders with the skills needed to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that teachers:
 - consistently have high expectations of what pupils can achieve across all subjects
 - plan activities at the right level of challenge for pupils, especially in writing and mathematics
 - provide the most able pupils with learning activities that inspire, excite and challenge them to think more deeply
 - help pupils to use and practise their skills in writing across a range of subjects
 - provide pupils with support and guidance that enables them to understand fully how they can improve their learning
 - have access to high-quality training to develop their practice.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- While all of the independent school standards are met, the school is not able to demonstrate that it is a consistently good school.
- Leaders have not acted swiftly enough and have not addressed the areas identified as needing improvement in the previous inspection.
- Leaders have an overgenerous view of the school's effectiveness, including the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders' monitoring does not focus sufficiently on the impact teaching has on pupil progress, especially the progress of groups.
- The school's current plan for improvement does not identify precisely enough the priorities leaders need to take in order to quickly improve pupil progress. There is no indication of who will take the actions or when. The plan does not specify how actions taken will be monitored or evaluated for their effectiveness in securing accelerated pupil progress.
- Procedures to check the performance of staff are in place. However, targets are not focused sufficiently on what improvements leaders expect to see in pupils' outcomes, especially for the most able pupils. Professional development for staff is not planned well enough to provide them with the guidance and support needed to reflect on and further improve their practice.
- Systems are in place to track pupil progress in English and mathematics. However, leaders do not carefully analyse the information gathered to inform next steps. The school has no established system in place to carefully check the progress of pupils across other subjects.
- Subject leaders are not provided with sufficient training, guidance and support in order to carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively. Subject leader plans list many actions to be taken but they are not precise in what needs to improve or sufficiently focused on the expected outcomes for pupils. Consequently, they do not know the progress pupils make in their subjects or what works well and why.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is being more carefully monitored by the special educational needs leader. However, interventions are not securely in place to enable these pupils to make the best possible progress.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders are working effectively to provide a curriculum that inspires, excites and enthuses pupils in their learning. Leaders are striving to provide pupils with high-quality experiences which will give them the skills required for their future. Pupils enjoy participating in the many varied opportunities being provided. For example, they spoke with enthusiasm about the additional activities they attend such as art, choir, tennis, acrobatic dance and taekwondo.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of people from different countries, cultures and beliefs. They are respectful and understand that while everyone is different, all should be treated equally. This was exemplified during the inspection when pupils told inspectors that they are encouraged to 'treat others as we want to be treated'.

- Pupils are well prepared for life in a democratic society. The teaching of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education supports their development effectively. For example, they understand democracy through the school council election process. They can explain clearly how, like in government elections, they are required to present their manifesto prior to the elections taking place. Once appointed, they understand the importance of their role and being the 'voice' of their peers in instigating change. For example, pupils articulately explained how they presented their rationale to leaders to install an all-weather playing area. As a result, their request was approved by leaders and pupils have access to this provision during playtimes and lunchtimes.
- Most parents are extremely positive about the quality of education and care their children are being given at Buckholme Towers, with many who would recommend the school. 'A fantastic learning environment, the pastoral care is faultless', 'my children thrive at the school' and 'a real family atmosphere' were just some of the many positive comments received by parents. A small number of parents shared their concerns about the limited progress their children are making, but these were not typical of the responses received during the inspection.

Governance

- The proprietors of the school divide responsibilities between education and business.
- Proprietors have an inflated view of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the school and the impact this has on pupils' outcomes. While they are aware that pupils' attainment is above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics, they do not sufficiently challenge and hold teachers to account for the progress pupils make, especially the most able pupils. Consequently, pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable across a range of subjects including mathematics and English.
- Finances are closely monitored to ensure that the financial stability of the school is maintained. For example, while the school does not receive any additional funding, they ensure they allocate money appropriately to ensure they are meeting the needs of pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Record-keeping is well maintained and meets all current statutory requirements. Staff receive safeguarding training so that a clear culture of safeguarding practice permeates the school. Staff are well informed of all types of risk to pupils, including radicalisation and extremism. They are confident of the action to take should they have any concerns about the safety or care of pupils. Staff have a clear understanding of the need to protect pupils from all potential risks.
- The school's systems to check the suitability of staff to work with pupils meets requirements. Leaders and proprietors have completed safer recruitment training. This ensures that all staff are carefully vetted prior to starting employment to verify that they are suitable to work with children.
- Staff share positive and trusting relationships with pupils. Consequently, pupils spoken to during the inspection reported that they are happy and feel safe in school. They know they are able to share any worries with a member of staff and that these will be quickly resolved.

- Parents are confident that their children are kept safe and are well looked after during their time in school. They comment that site security is good. They welcome the information and guidance they receive through newsletters about how to keep their children safe, for example when using the internet.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Pupils throughout the school are not making the progress of which they are capable because the quality of teaching and learning is not consistently good. There is too much variability in the quality of learning planned to meet the needs of pupils precisely to ensure that they progress well.
- Teachers' expectations are not always high enough to enable pupils to make the best possible progress. As a result, pupils are not sufficiently challenged and do not make the good progress that they should across a range of subjects, including mathematics and English. When leaders visit classes or check work in books they do not focus on how well groups of pupils are learning. Consequently, they do not provide teachers with specific guidance on how to better meet the needs of these groups. This is especially so for the most able pupils. While these pupils attain well and go on to successfully secure places at grammar schools, teachers do not consistently provide learning which makes them think hard and deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils' books show inconsistencies in teachers' expectations. There are differences between classes and across subjects. For example, the most able pupils show their true potential in some of their writing in English, but this is not evident in other subjects such as their science, history and geography work.
- There is too much variance in the quality of feedback to pupils and the application by teachers of the school's agreed assessment policy. Consequently, pupils are often unclear on what they need to do in order to improve their work. This stalls their progress.
- Most pupils commit to improving their work. However, books across a wide range of subjects show inconsistencies in pupils' application of knowledge and skills. There are too few opportunities for pupils to stretch their thinking or practise key skills.
- The school tracks achievement and progress. However, the system introduced is in its infancy and the information is not yet being used consistently to track carefully enough what pupils, know, can do, and understand across a range of subjects. In addition, the information gleaned from this tracking system is not routinely analysed to enable teachers to accurately plan pupils' next steps in learning.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is secure. This allows them to answer pupils' questions with accuracy and confidence. Where pupils make good progress, teachers use their effective questioning skills to probe and challenge pupils in their thinking. For example, in a Year 5 and 6 mathematics lesson, pupils were able to interpret graphs successfully and apply their learning to complete the subsequent activity with confidence.
- Teaching assistants know pupils well. They understand pupils' needs and support them well in their learning, especially for those pupils who need to catch up quickly with their reading.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong, built on trust and mutual respect. The pastoral leader ensures that pupils receive good care, guidance and support which enables pupils to feel well cared for and nurtured. As a result, pupils develop into extremely confident and self-assured young people who work and play happily together.
- Pupils describe how they feel safe. This is as a result of the school providing them with a range of activities which teach them how to keep safe. For example, younger pupils spoke to inspectors about 'streetwise', where they learn about road safety and 'stranger danger'.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and attend school regularly. This is reflected in their improving attendance, which is above the national average.
- The school actively encourages pupils to be fit and healthy. While the site is not extensive, pupils make the best use of the outside space available during social times. They engage in a range of activities such as football, netball and 'penguin walkers'. Additional sporting activities provide pupils with further opportunities to keep fit and healthy, such as rounders, cricket and dance.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils of all ages show they have a good understanding of what acceptable behaviour is. For example, pupils know that derogatory language will not be tolerated and the consequences of such behaviour.
- In lessons, pupils are courteous and polite. They demonstrate high levels of respect towards adults and each other. This behaviour is reflected at playtimes and lunchtimes when pupils play happily together and enjoy socialising with their friends.
- Pupils are fully aware of the different forms of bullying and told inspectors that they were 'adamant' there was no bullying in the school. They are confident that any 'squabbles' are quickly sorted out by staff. Inspectors viewed a wide range of evidence to show that bullying is exceedingly rare.
- Pupils typically show positive attitudes to their learning and demonstrate high levels of motivation and concentration with their school work. However, when activities do not inspire them or meet their needs precisely they lack motivation and become restless.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' outcomes require improvement because pupils are not making consistently good progress from their starting points.
- While pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is above national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics, there are uneven rates of progress across year groups and subjects.
- Pupils develop strong skills in their reading, writing and mathematics. However, they are not provided with sufficient opportunity to hone and practise these skills in other subjects.

Consequently, this hampers pupils' achievement. They do not consistently make the progress of which they are capable in a wide range of subjects such as science, history and geography.

- Leaders, subject leaders and teachers do not track and monitor the progress of pupils and groups of pupils well enough. Consequently, they do not know how well pupils are achieving across a wide range of subjects and they are unable to plan learning activities which meet their needs effectively.
- The most able pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable across a wide range of subjects including writing and mathematics. Often work is too easy and does not challenge or deepen their knowledge and understanding. Consequently, they are not reaching the highest levels of which they are capable.
- Until recently, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities were not being carefully tracked. Consequently, these pupils were not always receiving the necessary support to help them catch up quickly with their peers. New learning support plans are now in place and teaching assistants are more carefully timetabled to ensure these pupils get the appropriate support. Early indications show that these plans are securing better progress for these pupils.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The independent school standards for the early years provision are being met. However, the early years requires improvement as not enough children make more than expected progress.
- Children start Nursery with a range of skills, knowledge and understanding that are usually above those expected. Staff form extremely positive relationships which ensure that children quickly settle in a school environment and learn to be independent. They continue to build skills across all areas of learning. This ensures they are well prepared to enter the Reception class.
- Children typically arrive in Reception confident and curious learners with knowledge and skills above those typical for their age. Despite children successfully achieving a good level of development and being suitably prepared for Year 1, this does not demonstrate good progress. This is because they are not extended and stretched enough in their learning to exceed the expected standard at the end of their early years.
- Teaching is not consistently good. While subject knowledge is good, planned activities do not meet the needs of children precisely. For example, the most able children are confident in their reading, writing and number work but activities do not challenge them sufficiently to make greater strides across the wider areas of learning.
- Actions plans for improvement are in place. However, they do not focus well enough on determining how planned actions are going to be monitored and evaluated to check what works well and why.
- The early years leader carefully tracks what individual children can and cannot do. However, the information gathered is not used well enough to determine if there are any differences in progress between groups of children which need to be tackled. School information viewed during the inspection shows that while numbers of children are small,

girls are achieving better than boys.

- Areas of learning are well organised, providing children with a range of activities to make links to their learning and stimulate creativity. For example, during the inspection children in the Reception class visited the Oceanarium and were excitedly making their own versions of it on their return to school. They were able to demonstrate their fine motor skills, using scissors to carefully cut out. In addition, children were able to demonstrate their skills in successfully finding solutions when they had made mistakes in their construction, working together well.
- The relationships between staff and children are strong. As a result, children settle quickly, learn to work and play harmoniously together, and enjoy their time in school.
- Behaviour is good. Staff act as positive role models and continuously demonstrate high expectations of children's behaviour. Consequently, children in the early years provision quickly learn what they can and cannot do. This provides a strong foundation as they move into Year 1.
- Staff receive updates and guidance in all aspects of keeping children safe. They know their children well and watch them carefully. They are confident in the actions to take if they were to have any concerns about a child's safety. Consequently, children feel safe and secure, and enjoy their early experiences of education.
- Parents speak positively about the experiences their children have. They welcome the regular opportunities they have to talk with staff and look at and contribute to their children's learning journals. A comment made by a parent with a child in the early years, typical of those made by other parents was, 'My children are very happy and thriving at Buckholme, home from home.'

School details

Unique reference number	113930
DfE registration number	836/6004
Inspection number	10012907

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	106
Number of part-time pupils	8
Proprietor	Eric Bosence/Iain Robertson
Headteacher	Iain Robertson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,180 to £8,475
Telephone number	01202 742871
Website	www.buckholmetowers.co.uk
Email address	office@buckholme.dorset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–10 May 2013

Information about this school

- Buckholme Towers is a co-educational, independent day school.
- The school was founded in 1939 on the present site. It is in a large Victorian house which has been adapted for use as a school.
- The proprietors have responsibility for the governance of the school.
- When the school was last inspected in May 2013, it was judged to be good. At that time, the school did not meet all independent school standards.
- In the early years provision, the Nursery offers places to children from the age of three. They are taught in one class, with many attending on a part-time basis. Children in Reception are taught in one class and attend full time.

- The majority of pupils are White British and most pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- There are no pupils at the school who are eligible for free school meals or who are children looked after.
- The school does not receive any sports funding.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited every class, mostly jointly with the headteacher, to observe learning and to scrutinise the quality of pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and staff. The inspectors took into consideration the responses of 16 questionnaires completed by staff. A telephone conversation took place with the proprietor during the inspection.
- Inspectors met with a group of pupils to listen to their views about the school. The views of other pupils were gathered during lessons, playtimes and lunchtimes.
- A wide range of documentation was examined, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, the school's development plan, and information relating to pupils' achievement and progress. Records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors considered the 28 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 28 text messages were taken into account. Inspectors spoke to parents informally at the start of the day.

Inspection team

Jen Southall, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Martin Bragg

Ofsted Inspector

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