



Office for Standards
in Education

Buckswood School

CONTENTS

[COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION.](#)

- [1. The quality of education provided by the school](#)
- [2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils](#)
- [3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils](#)
- [4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff](#)
- [5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation](#)
- [6. The quality of information for parents and other partners](#)
- [7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints](#)

[SCHOOL DETAILS](#)

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Buckswood School is a distinctive co-educational school for international pupils and students aged 10-19. Students follow a curriculum delivered through the medium of English up to the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), and the General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary and Advanced Levels (AS and A levels). As well as year round English language

courses, a wide range of extra-curricular activities are offered. It is a very young school, having started in September 1999. It has been located for the last two years in the countryside between Hastings and Winchelsea, in the grounds of Broomham Hall. It caters for 153 pupils and students, including 108 international students from 33 nations, for some of whom English is not their first language. There are 117 boarders.

Summary of main findings

The education provided by the school is good. It has a broad and flexible curriculum which is responsive to pupils' needs. This is supplemented by a breadth of other activities. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is very good. A third of the lessons seen were very good and all except two were satisfactory.

What the school does well:

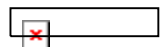
- The school has a flexible and broad curriculum that provides a sound basis for planning for pupils who have a broad range of linguistic ability;
- teaching is good and pupils make good progress in most lessons seen and over time;
- the school provides well for its pupils' learning through one-to-one "Access Time";
- a broad range of extra curricular activities encourage pupils to mix and talk in English;
- provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is a strength of the school; and
- the behaviour seen in and around the school is excellent.

What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations:

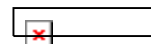
In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003, the school should:

- fully implement its policy for literacy development so that all pupils may make appropriate progress;
- provide appropriate careers guidance for secondary age pupils;
- improve the aspects of the premises and accommodation which are described in section 5 of this report;
- include the name and address of the Chair of the Board of Governors in the information sent to parents and to prospective parents;
- improve the complaints procedure described in Section 7 of this report.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION.



1. The quality of education provided by the school



The quality of curriculum

The school provides a curriculum that is generally broad, balanced and flexible. The school's curriculum policy claims "the Buckswood difference" for each curriculum area. For example, for Modern Foreign languages, "Buckswood's location means that trips to France can be offered regularly". These claims are realised in practice.

In the main school, (Forms 1-5), pupils follow a curriculum leading to GCSEs. The curriculum includes a core of English, mathematics and science. There is a good range of other subjects but provision for technological subjects is confined to information and communications technology (ICT). Pupils in Forms 3-5 are grouped into Red and Gold classes, broadly on linguistic ability but taking account of academic potential. In college and in the school's sixth form, there is a good range of GCE AS and A-level subjects. Interesting additional features are classes on Introduction to Chinese (Forms 1 and 2) and Ancient Civilizations (Form 3 Red) on Saturday mornings.

On entry to the school, pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) are tested for their ability in English and placed either in the school's International Study Centre (ISC) or mainstream classes. In the ISC, there are very good opportunities for EAL pupils to improve their English through the Cambridge examinations system before transferring to the main school or college. In the Main school, the curriculum is sufficiently flexible to enable EAL pupils to take a reduced number of GCSEs whilst continuing to receive EFL tuition as well as lessons in their own language. The school also provides EAL pupils with the opportunity to take a very wide range of GCSEs and A-levels in their own languages, with the expectation of early examination entry.

The curriculum is underpinned by schemes of work that, in most cases, are linked to the National Curriculum and give a sound basis for planning lessons. Daily lesson planning is good, produced to a common format with explicit sections for learning outcomes, literacy, differentiation and individual pupils' needs.

There is a very wide range of extra curricular activities and clubs, which meet twice weekly after school. Each has stated termly aims, objectives and skills to be taught. This explicit emphasis on the learning intended promotes well structured and valuable learning.

The school recognises that the English language underpins everything done in the school and that literacy is integral to successful learning across the curriculum. Literacy is promoted, in particular, through discrete reading lessons for Forms 1-3 in the school's Academic Resource Centre, ("the ARC") and weekly public speaking lessons in Forms 1-2. There is a bookshop on site, and a librarian was recently employed to manage the ARC. The school has produced guidance on teaching EAL pupils in mainstream classes. This is potentially useful but not consistently adhered to. During the inspection week, the headteacher issued a literacy policy to all staff. The format for daily lesson planning encourages teachers to plan literacy development in their lessons. The relevant section of the lesson plan is not consistently completed or is insufficiently specific and, as a result, many teachers miss opportunities to promote pupils' literacy.

The school has a clearly articulated policy on pupils with special educational needs (SEN). There is a limited amount of withdrawal of pupils from lessons for individual help. Although pupils' needs, particularly in language development, are very wide in range, they are taught with their peers. Teachers are adept at noting pupils' particular needs in their lesson planning but are less successful in strategies to address these needs in class. Teachers are available in their classrooms three times

a week after school to help pupils catch up. Pupils benefit considerably from this access time.

The school has an up-to-date policy for personal social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship based on the National Curriculum citizenship guidelines. There is a structured PSHE programme developing in Forms 1- 4 and in college, but not in Form 5. This includes human rights, racism and discrimination, healthy eating, and personal organisation and study skills. At present there is no systematic careers guidance for secondary aged pupils. College students have access to specialised careers advice in nearby Rye and a recently appointed deputy headteacher is developing work experience in college and in careers education and guidance throughout the school.

Quality of teaching and assessment

Over a third of the lessons seen were very good, and all except two of the rest were satisfactory. Most teaching seen was meticulously planned and the school's well designed planning sheets, which have been used and collected throughout the last two years, encourage the sharing of aims with pupils, and the effective differentiation and planning of activities to match the range of strengths and weaknesses of pupils in each teaching group. One of the best lessons seen was a lively geography lesson on the use of cartography and graphs, explicitly planned for the range of pupils present in terms of their level of language skills. Essential vocabulary was written on the whiteboard in advance to act as prompting for pupils. Pupils were invited in turn to amend the class teacher's board diagrams, and to explain why each example required changing, thus demonstrating their levels of understanding. Teachers who have been present through the last two years will have received a range of useful training and staff development. Those who are more recently recruited, may need further training on how to adapt teaching materials and strategies, to match the breadth of linguistic ability present in their classes.

The school provides twice termly assessments and termly reports. All pupils have suitable and measurable targets for their subjects which are pasted inside their exercise books. Access time showed very good one-to-one teaching, which is very effective in enabling pupils to address their problems and to make progress in areas where they are finding difficulty. It is also a time when class teachers obtain a very clear assessment of pupils' strengths and weaknesses. Prep is also a valuable learning time for boarders, and day pupils also have an opportunity for supervised prep on most days, which is an evident benefit, and which in combination with their prep diaries, provides suitable assurance that pupils are working appropriately from day-to-day.

Despite the range of pupils' linguistic ability, pupils are achieving close to national expectations for their age in two thirds of their lessons and are above national expectations in about a third. Pupils of similar age but from such a wide variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds reach, initially, a very wide range in terms of standards. In general, pupils' work shows rapidly improving achievement and attainment, with increasing maturity and length of time in the school. They make good progress. The marking is mostly, but not always, consistent with the school's own policy and procedures, and thus varies in the extent to which it is of assistance to pupils. There is some extended writing in the Key Stage 4 work but less for younger pupils, except in history. Much of the mathematical work is of a higher standard than pupils' other subjects where their English is not as mature as their conceptual ability. Presentation is generally good but standards do vary, and, for this, the marking does not always identify the problem sufficiently.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

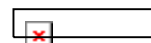
The school meets almost all the requirements but there are two issues to address.

What must the school do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003, the school should:

- fully implement its policy for literacy development, so that all pupils may make appropriate progress (paragraph 1.2c);
- provide appropriate careers guidance for secondary age pupils (paragraph 1.2g).

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils



Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school.

The attention given to the pupils' spiritual development is a powerful influence on their successful acquisition of a clear and secure set of values and beliefs. An unusual feature is the sayings, including those of inspiring leaders, that are displayed in the courtyard (the central area in the school where registration takes place). Pupils take cognisance of these and staff encourage pupils to practice what the sayings preach. During the inspection week, a Remembrance Day service, held in the local parish church, included a poignant reading of the names of the countries represented in the school community that were involved in 20th century conflicts. This made pupils think about their lives and those of their compatriots, and their personal place in the world.

The school's clear behaviour policy and code of conduct provide an effective framework for pupils to learn to take responsibility for their actions and distinguish right from wrong. The very good relationships between staff and pupils demonstrate further key values, particularly respect for one another. Teachers consistently model good manners, for example thanking pupils for coming to their lessons. Moral tenets - for example, "Look at how far you've come, not at how far you still have to go" - read out daily by the school's proprietor to the whole school before lunch, inform pupils' attitudes.

There is a very strong feeling of community in the school. This is shared equally by staff and pupils, who relate extremely well to one another. Much takes place together, for example registration in the courtyard. One pupil, interviewed during the inspection, described the school as "small in size, but a big family". Meal times, the house system, extra curricular activities and clubs, visits and boarding provision, in particular, contribute to the effective provision for the pupils' social development.

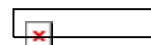
The school provides many good opportunities to promote the pupils' cultural development and their appreciation of cultural diversity, while providing a good introduction to this country's culture. For example, national flags of many of the countries represented in the Buckswood community are hung in the school's dining room. It is the school's policy to encourage the sharing of cultural traditions by holding regular evenings with traditional food and entertainment. During the week of the inspection, there were two lunches where Chinese food was served. Use of chopsticks was compulsory - "out of respect for other cultures" as one pupil expressed it. Cultural development is particularly explicit in art with projects on Bangladeshi street art; fashion, including Indian fabrics; totem poles; and aboriginal art.

Behaviour during the inspection was excellent. The school puts emphasis on good manners. A particular feature of the inspection was the courteous acknowledgement of visitors. Personal development is evident through pupils' Records of Achievement. These include worthwhile personal aims that are regularly reviewed.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



The school takes its responsibilities regarding the health, safety and welfare of pupils very seriously. It has a range of policies, which clearly set out the principles and procedures guiding the health and safety of pupils. On appointment, staff are given comprehensive induction on health and safety issues. Risk assessments are carried out regularly on various aspects of the school's operations. The school has fully acted on the recommendations from the fire officer who has also supervised the fire evacuation procedures. All matters relating to fire safety were found to be satisfactory. Pupils are adequately supervised to ensure their safety. Staff are well informed about individual pupils and there are excellent arrangements for pupils to meet with staff regularly to discuss their concerns.

Clear child protection procedures are in place, the school matron being the nominated child protection officer. There have been no child protection cases or disclosures so far. Consideration should, however, be given to ensuring that the nominated child protection officer receives appropriate training. Access to the internet via the school's own computer network is filtered. Most boarders have access to the internet via their own private laptop computer. The school is currently considering further options for monitoring and filtering this access.

Adequate first aid is available at all times. Several staff have first aid qualifications, including the sports coach who has been trained in dealing with traumatic injuries. The school matron keeps detailed records of any first aid administered. School visits are carefully planned, but risk assessments for visits need to be more precise in identifying the risk factors associated with different activities and the actions which need to be taken to minimise these.

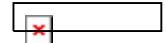
Pupils are extremely well behaved, very polite and courteous. Pupils, who represent thirty different nationalities, work and play together in harmony. Staff work hard at encouraging tolerance, respect and acceptance of others. The school has an anti-bullying policy with clear guidance to pupils on what to do if they are unhappy or are being bullied. Pupils report that bullying is minimal and that any reported cases are dealt with promptly and effectively by staff. There is a clear system of rewards and sanctions, with guidance to staff on how to administer these. Staff and prefects keep appropriate written records of sanctions imposed on pupils.

The school maintains an admission register in accordance with regulations and attendance is good. Its disability policy makes adequate arrangements for the admission and support of pupils with disabilities. The school has a draft accessibility plan.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

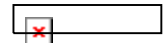


Buckswood School Limited are the proprietors of the school. All staff and other adults with contact with pupils have been subject to satisfactory clearance by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) at appropriate levels, and to checks against List 99. The school adopts appropriate procedures in contacting the previous employers of any care staff. References are taken up fully and recorded in writing.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The school moved to its present site two years ago. Overall, the accommodation and premises meet the school's educational aims. There is a good range of teaching accommodation including an attractive library and resource room (the ARC), a modern computer suite, a cinema and lecture theatre and a music room. There is a newly built art studio and recently refurbished English and language suites. These are maintained in excellent order. The science laboratory requires some attention, which is planned for next summer. Most classrooms are spacious enough for the numbers of pupils using them. Some however have unnecessary or inappropriate furniture.

In some classrooms such as the art room, pupils' work is attractively displayed on the walls. This however is not the norm, and opportunities are missed to use displays to support pupils' development and their use of English. The school has excellent outdoor recreation space. This includes a tennis and basket ball court, golf course, badminton lawn, large playing fields and extensive grounds for quad biking and horse riding. The school also has a swimming pool and uses the local sports centre as its gymnasium. Building work is in progress on a new music studio, and to provide a larger staffroom in the current music classroom.

Boarding accommodation is adequate although some rooms are a little cramped. There are 35 bunk beds and 55 single beds; older students are largely housed in twin rooms. Pupils are allowed to personalise their bedrooms but girls' dormitories are generally more attractive than boys'. The girls' house and college boys' dormitory have common rooms, which provide additional space for relaxing. There are insufficient electrical sockets, across the whole school, and this risks overload and trailing leads. This is particularly noticeable in dormitories where pupils do not have sufficient electricity outlets for bedside reading lamps. The school is currently redressing this issue.

Kitchen facilities and the quality and condition of flooring in most areas are good. The school has a sick room but this has no wash basin, and day pupils who are sick sometimes use the dormitories while waiting to be collected by relatives. There is no isolation room for boarders. Buildings are adequately secured by day and at night. Lighting, heating and ventilation are generally good with a number of exceptions. The computer suite has poor lighting which does not meet health and safety regulations. The grounds to the front of the main building and the rear of the dormitory cottages could benefit from additional security lighting. The windows in Battle room in the girls' house do not

have any catches, and the girls' WC in Holly cottage has no lighting.

The school is generally in satisfactory decorative order. The level of cleanliness and maintenance of buildings, furniture and furnishings are also satisfactory. However, there are inadequate arrangements for the collection and disposal of sanitary waste from lavatories serving the girls' dormitories.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

No.

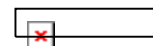
What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

The school meets many of the requirements for registration, but in order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards the school should improve the quality of the boarding accommodation as follows:

- Supply sanitary bins to all WCs designated for girls' use and increase the frequency of collection and disposal. (paragraph 5u);
- ensure there is adequate hot water supply to the showers in the girls' house. (paragraph 5u);
- Install a washbasin in the sick room and provide isolation rooms for pupils who are ill (paragraph 5l);
- Improve the lighting in the ICT room. (paragraph 5u);
- Install lighting in the girls' WC in Holly Cottage. (paragraph 5u);
- Provide adequate heating to the dormitories outside the main house. (paragraph 5u);
- Replace window catches to the window in Battle room in the girls' house. (paragraph 5u);
- Provide an adequate number of electric sockets for pupils' use in all teaching and accommodation areas particularly in the girls' dormitories. (paragraph 5u) and
- Phase out the use of bunk beds for older pupils in line with NCSC recommendations. (paragraph 5u)

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The school provides a good and appropriate range of information to parents and other professional stakeholders. Only the name and address of the Chair of the Governing Body are not currently provided to parents and this is now being rectified henceforward.

The school provides very full and effective reports termly and assessment results twice termly. Only three sets of parents out of 40 who responded to the questionnaire considered that they were not well informed about their children's progress.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

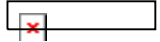
The school meets almost all the requirements for information to parents and prospective parents except in one case.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should provide parents with information regarding:

- The school needs to include the name and address of the Chair of the Board of Governors in its information sent to parents and prospective parents (paragraph 6.2c).

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints



The school has a clear complaints policy and procedure which is in line with the requirements of the National Minimum Boarding Standards, but does not meet the Education Act 2002 regulations in full, in that it does not set out clear time scales for the management of complaints. It does not currently make clear that all concerned should receive a copy of any findings and recommendations. It does not make clear that the correspondence, statements and records of complaints should be kept confidential.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

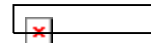
No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- ensure that the complaints procedure sets out clear time scales for the management of complaints (paragraph 7.c);
- ensure that the complaints procedure provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and that the procedure stipulates that the complainant, proprietors and headteachers, and, where relevant, the person complained about, should be given a copy of any findings and recommendations (paragraph 7.i);
- ensure that correspondence, statements and records of complaints are kept confidential (paragraph 7.k).

SCHOOL DETAILS



Name of school:	Buckswood School
Type of school:	Secondary
DfES Ref.No.	845/6031
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	10-19
Number on roll:	153
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Fees:	Day: From £7425.00 ; Residential: up to £15,585 .
Address of school:	Buckswood School, Broomham Hall, Guestling Nr Hastings East Sussex TN35 4LT
Email address:	achieve@buckswood.co.uk
Telephone number:	01424 813813
Fax number:	01424 812100
Headteacher:	Mr Tim Fish
Proprietor:	Buckswood School Limited
Reporting Inspector:	Mr Neville Grenyer HMI
Dates of Inspection:	10-14 November 2003

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