



Office for Standards
in Education

Blossom House School

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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.

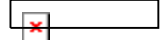
Information about the school

Blossom House School is an independent day special school for up to 100 boys and girls between three and 12 years of age who have speech, language and communication difficulties. The school is situated in the London borough of Merton. It was established in 1993 in nearby premises and moved to its current location in 1996. Final registration status was given by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in 1996.

Currently there are 96 pupils on roll, eighty-four boys and twelve girls. Eleven of the pupils are in the nursery and attend part-time for morning sessions only. Pupils come from a wide geographical area, many from neighbouring Local Education Authorities (LEAs). All pupils are considered as having

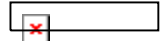
special educational needs and 55 have a statement of special educational need.

Summary of main findings



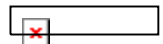
This is a good school which meets successfully the complex needs of its pupils. It is very well managed and organised and the management provides clear leadership. Staff are well qualified and have a common sense of purpose; this provides a consistency of support which benefits the pupils. Pupils enjoy working with the staff and these positive relationships help them to make sound progress, with a significant number making good progress. The accommodation is cheerful and welcoming and promotes a stimulating environment which supports pupils' learning.

What the school does well:



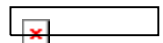
- it provides a broad and balanced curriculum that is suitable for all pupils in the school;
- teachers and therapists, supported by skilled teaching assistants, provide challenging lessons which meet the needs of pupils well;
- the multi-sensory approach to learning is used consistently throughout the school and so pupils make good gains towards their personal targets;
- there is thorough initial testing of speech, language and communication which enables future gains to be measured;
- the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good and this encourages pupils to take on appropriate responsibilities in school and the outside world;
- there is a caring ethos within the school which is supported well by a range of policies and practices which promote pupils' good behaviour; and
- pupils' health, welfare and safety are of high importance and are safeguarded as such.

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

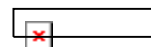


- ensure that the admission register includes all the details necessary to meet the requirements of the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995;
- include within its brochure references to the discipline and exclusions policy; and
- provide financial information to local authorities which fund places at the school.

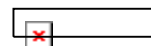
COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION



1. The quality of education provided by the school



The quality of the curriculum



The school provides a broad curriculum which is appropriate for the ages and abilities of all pupils. This includes the full National Curriculum alongside a range of therapies designed to meet the individual needs of pupils. The curriculum is set out in an extensive range of documentation which supports staff in their teaching. These plans and schemes of work enable staff to implement an effective curriculum. The amount of teaching time during the school day is in excess of the minimum recommended for pupils of similar age. The additional time is used well to enable access for all pupils to relevant therapies.

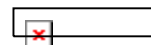
The work of the school's wide range of therapists complements the academic curriculum, enabling pupils to overcome their disabilities and extend their achievements. Professionals from the various disciplines share their knowledge and plan together to ensure that the curriculum fulfils the requirements of pupils' statements of special educational need.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship are considered to be key areas in pupils' development. The positive ethos of the school nurtures this development but it is also supported through the science curriculum as well as during group and tutorial gatherings.

The school prepares effective individual education plans (IEPs). They are reviewed regularly and include practical strategies designed to aid pupils' learning. Lesson planning is influenced by the requirements of pupils' IEP's and this gives all pupils the opportunity to achieve and make progress.

Children within the nursery, who attend for half of each day, follow an appropriate programme of activities. This phase of their education prepares them well for full time education.

The quality of teaching and assessment



In half of the 28 lessons observed, teaching was good to excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Lessons are well structured and time is used wisely, with teachers regularly and appropriately informing pupils of the time allocations for each activity. There is consistency in the quality of teaching throughout the school. Lessons invariably include a number of listening and practical activities, for example the development of conversational skills through story, discussion, modelling, and question and answer games. A good range of resources support effective teaching and learning. The consistent use of plenaries at the end of each lesson enables pupils to reflect on their developing knowledge, understanding and skills and evaluate their progress against the lesson aims.

There are good baseline assessments of pupils' speech, language and communication skills. Along

with meticulous, ongoing assessment these ensure that pupils' progress can be evaluated accurately and that teachers plan for higher achievement. The majority of parents consider that their child is making good progress at school.

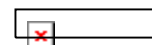
Teachers and speech and language therapists are well qualified, have good subject knowledge, and are ably supported by highly skilled teaching assistants. The multi-disciplinary teams work well together to ensure that the individual needs of all pupils are met.

A clear, well understood, positive approach to the management of behaviour is used effectively by all staff to ensure that good behaviour is promoted consistently. The school is successful in meeting its aims in providing an environment which nurtures communication and where pupils are supported in their learning by skilled multi-professional teams. Pupils have confidence and trust in staff and express their pleasure in being at school.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

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



The school is successful in developing pupils' self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to reflect and consider their position within the wider world. There is a good religious education curriculum which enables pupils to learn about beliefs held by faiths other than their own. Their sense of wonder is further developed through a series of planned visits, such as those to Downside and Syon Park. These also support learning in science and geography respectively.

The provision for pupils' moral development is good and they know the difference between right and wrong. This knowledge is further complemented by the ethos of the school, which places strong emphasis on respect for others. The consistent application of a positive behaviour management system helps pupils in their relationships with others and by the time they reach Year 6 pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good.

A good range of visits to cultural and social events enables pupils to rehearse their social skills and to widen their knowledge of the world around them. Opportunities for social development are provided to pupils at appropriate times, according to their maturity. For example, pupils become their 'class leader' for the day and elected older pupils form a school council in order to discuss general concerns with the Principal. Community responsibility is encouraged through events such as carol singing to elderly residents of homes within the locality and by providing gift boxes for disadvantaged children. Pupils also take part in charity fund raising events, such as the annual 'red nose' day.

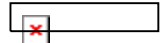
There is a wide range of opportunities through which pupils gain an understanding of their own as well as other cultures. Visits to synagogues, churches and temples raise pupils' awareness of the diverse cultures within Britain. The school uses locations within London very well in order to extend the pupils' cultural development. Among these is the Tate Modern where pupils have opportunities to consider art works, such as those by Hepworth. Pupils have attended an event at the Albert Hall, in order to listen to the author J K Rowling. In the subjects of the curriculum pupils learn of ancient cultures, such as the Romans and Egyptians, and in annual drama productions they have studied

some of Shakespeare's plays, such as *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



The school has a positive ethos in which the personal development of pupils is nurtured. All pupils are cared for and cared about. A cornerstone of this is the very good relationships between staff and pupils. In their calm responses to challenging behaviour and the way in which they go about their teaching, the staff provide good role models for pupils. Positive behaviour management approaches are used consistently across the school and these effectively defuse situations which potentially could be more serious. There is a seamless relationship between teachers and staff who provide therapies. This is indicative of the philosophy in the school, which has good regard for the development of the whole person.

There are comprehensive written policies to safeguard pupils' welfare and safety; these include child protection, anti-bullying and health and safety policies. A record book for sanctions is kept in line with regulations, though could be further improved if the book had bound and numbered pages.

The school takes good care of its pupils with regard to health, safety and First Aid. There are eleven qualified First Aiders among the staff and their names are posted throughout the school. Risk assessments for educational visits are carried out and staff provided with clear instructions about their response in the event of any emergency. Appropriate fire risk assessments have been undertaken and the school has recently undertaken a health and safety audit. Where deficiencies were noted remedial work has already been started.

Attendance registers are kept in the required manner and school policies reflect the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. The way in which the admissions register is currently maintained does not meet the required regulation. The school has put immediate changes into effect which will address this issue.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

No

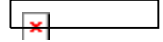
What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

The school meets most of the requirements for registration but in order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- ensure that all the required details are included in the admission register in accordance with

the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 (paragraph 3.9);

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff



The proprietor of the school is registered as Blossom House School Ltd. All staff have been subject to satisfactory clearance with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) at an enhanced level.

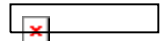
Staff qualifications, identity and work permits are checked and references are taken up with previous employers or training institutions. There are clear records to show that this has been done.

The Principal provides good management and leadership, which inculcate a common sense of purpose in staff. A highly skilled, multi-disciplinary staff is employed and the school places an emphasis on providing in-service training for all staff which ensures a common approach to education. It is also a recommending body for the Graduate Training Programme and this assists staff to gain qualified teacher status where required.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



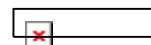
The premises consist of a number of suitably converted buildings and the overall quality of the school's accommodation is good. It is used well and is clean, bright and cheerful. Pupils make very positive comments about the quality of the school and its grounds. Classrooms are spacious and appropriately furnished and there are a number of smaller rooms available for one-to-one or small group work, which facilitates therapy provision. There are sufficient computers in the computer suite to allow each pupil in a class to work at their own work station. The teaching rooms and corridors display pupils' work, which celebrates their achievement and provides encouragement for them to do better. All staff have their own office accommodation and also access to a staff room. Outside, there are a number of hard surfaced and grassed play areas which allow pupils in the different key stages to play separately or together. A tennis court is used for outdoor games and there is a small, outdoor swimming pool.

The school has a small lift and a number of modifications which enable it to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The school prospectus gives a range of information to parents and prospective parents. The information includes the philosophy and aims of the school, the support available to parents, the curriculum provided for pupils, admission requirements and procedures together with administrative matters. There are no references to the school's policies relating to discipline or exclusions. Information relating to pupils' personal and academic progress in each of the subject areas, as well as speech and language development, is provided to parents on a termly basis. Parents are fully included in the annual review process where their child has a statement of special educational need. The majority of parents are satisfied that these procedures give them an accurate picture of their child's progress and they feel comfortable in approaching the school with questions, suggestions or problems. There is, however, a minority of parents who feel the school could improve its communication with them. The school has worked hard to communicate with parents through other means, such as weekly designated times for informal meetings as well as regular newsletters.

The school does not supply the required financial information to those local authorities which fund places at the school for pupils with statements.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

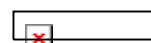
No

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

The school meets most of the regulations required for registration but in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- make reference in the prospectus to its policies relating to discipline and exclusions (paragraph 6.2e); and
- provide financial information concerning income and expenditure to those local authorities which wholly or partly fund places for pupils registered at the school (paragraph 6.7).

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

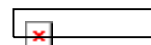


The school has recently implemented a policy for dealing with complaints. Parents have been advised by letter of this policy and it is available on the school's web site. The policy lays out clearly the procedure for registering a complaint, the different stages through which a complaint is managed, the people involved and the rights of the parents. In addition, the school frequently encourages parents to make contact if they have concerns or would like to discuss a matter.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

SCHOOL DETAILS



Name of school:	Blossom House School
Type of school:	Special
DfES ref. no.	315/6076
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	3-12 years
Number on roll:	96
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Fees:	Day: £16,725 - £17,310 p.a.
Address of school:	8, The Drive, Wimbledon, London, SW20 8TG
Email address:	blossomhouse@hotmail.com
Telephone number:	020 8946 7348
Fax number:	020 8944 5848
Headteacher:	Mrs Joanna Burgess
Proprietor:	Blossom House School Ltd
Reporting Inspector:	Mrs Morag Bowden HMI
Dates of Inspection:	24-27 November 2003

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