

Branwood Preparatory School

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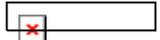
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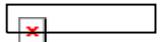
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Introduction and summary

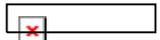


Purpose and scope of the inspection



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.

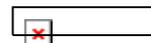
Information about the school



Branwood Preparatory School is an independent co-educational day school. It was founded in 1928. The school provides education for pupils aged three to eleven years, and prepares boys and girls for the entrance examinations to the independent grammar schools in the Greater Manchester area. The school aims to maintain high academic standards and to combine traditional levels of discipline and hard work with elements of modern educational thinking.

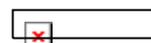
The school is situated in Eccles, near Manchester and is managed by a headmaster responsible to a Board of Governors and Trustees. Branwood School Trust Limited has Registered Charitable status. The modern purpose-built premises stand in two acres of grounds. The kindergarten class has its own premises close by within the grounds. At the time of the inspection, there were 192 full-time pupils on roll with 49 below compulsory school age. There are a very small number of pupils identified as having special educational needs, all of whom receive additional support.

Summary of main findings



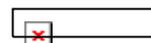
Branwood Preparatory School is an effective school which serves its pupils well. It is successful in meeting its aims to prepare pupils for entry to independent grammar schools. Relationships at all levels are positive and this helps the pupils to enjoy school. The pupils' confidence and sense of responsibility develop well over time. Behaviour is very good in school and pupils play together amiably during break times. The teaching is good overall with some very effective features. The curriculum is sound, but could be improved with a more coherent approach to planning and by using assessment information when planning lessons. Personal, social, and health education (PSHE) and information and communication technology (ICT) are areas for further development. Parents are very satisfied with the education provided and are supportive of the school. The school meets all but two of the regulations.

What the school does well



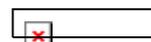
- it succeeds in preparing pupils effectively for independent grammar schools;
- teaching is good;
- its pupils' behaviour is very good;
- its provision for the pupils' welfare, health and safety is good;
- it develops the pupils' cultural awareness effectively;
- it provides parents with a good range of information about their child's progress and events in the life of the school; and
- it provides a well-equipped and attractive learning environment.

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



- ensure that attendance registers indicate whether absences are authorised or unauthorised by using the appropriate symbols; and
- inform parents of the number of complaints registered under the complaints procedure during the preceding school year.

Next steps



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

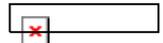
- further improve teachers' curriculum planning by developing consistency in style and quality, particularly in providing clear learning objectives for lessons;
- use assessment information, supported by a marking policy, to inform planning; and

- develop the provision for PSHE and ICT.

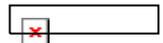
Compliance with the regulations for registration



1. The quality of education provided by the school



The quality of the curriculum



The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. It meets all of the requirements of the regulations, although there are areas for improvement and development. There are schemes of work for each subject, but few policies to support these documents. The policy for music is a very good example of details of provision and learning objectives. Details of the curriculum are provided for parents in the clearly written prospectus.

The curriculum for the kindergarten fully meets the recommendations for children under five. The children experience a wide range of interesting, practical activities which provide a firm foundation for future learning. Long-and medium-term planning is thorough. Daily planning clearly outlines what is to be covered in each session.

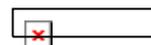
In the main, the school teaches all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, extended in some classes by French. The school's allocation of time to subjects is satisfactory, with emphasis given to English, mathematics and reasoning. There is thoughtful provision for religious education and provision for music is a strength of the school. Pupils are regularly entered for music grade examinations and have numerous opportunities for the advanced development of musical skills as a result of the availability of individual tuition on a variety of instruments. The curriculum for physical education is well-planned and comprehensive. Provision for art is generally good, with pupils given opportunities to experience a wide range of media. The pupils also study and copy the work of a range of artists, such as Picasso and Van Gogh. There are satisfactory cross-curricular links in lessons throughout the school. Information and communication technology (ICT) supports learning in lessons in the kindergarten and Years 1 and 2. However, the pupils in Years 3 to 6 have had little opportunity to develop their skills in ICT. A computer suite will be operational from January 2005 and a teacher has been appointed to teach ICT to these pupils. The school has a policy for personal, health and social education, but the subject is not structured or taught systematically.

The long-and medium-term planning for subjects in Years 1 - 6 is mostly of at least satisfactory and sometimes good quality. However, the lack of consistency in both format and detail is an area for development. In most planning, there is insufficient information on how the needs of the higher or lower attaining pupils will be met. Provision in lessons for those pupils who need extra support is satisfactory, but work is not always closely matched to their ability to enable them to make good progress. At present, pupils are generally expected to complete the same tasks. This occasionally results in the pupils of higher attainment not being fully challenged and puts the pupils of lower attainment at a disadvantage.

The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Good opportunities for judo, squash and cross-country running are available and well-attended. The school has a strong `show

business' tradition and drama is a further significant aspect of its provision. Every two years, pupils in Years 3 and 4 put on a production at the Lowry Quays Theatre, while Years 5 and 6 perform one separately on the same evening. On the non-Lowry year, three year groups perform in an 'in-house' summer concert in the school hall. Periodic visits are also made to theatres, museums, the Martin Mere Wild Fowl Trust, and Chester zoo. All of these worthwhile activities enhance the curricular provision.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



The quality of teaching overall is good with a majority of lessons being judged as good or better. A few lessons were outstanding. A third of the lessons observed were satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed.

In the best lessons, teachers' subject knowledge is secure, planning precise and well matched to pupils' levels of attainment. Learning objectives are featured within much of the planning, and these are routinely shared with the class at the start of the lesson. The most successful lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and are also characterised by a lively and enthusiastic approach which maintains the interest and active involvement of pupils. As a result, pupils make good progress in their learning and achieve good standards. Pupils are also frequently presented with challenging questions and tasks which demand logical thinking. The most successful teaching demonstrates an effective management of both time and pupils' behaviour by skilful planning which incorporates a range of teaching strategies and appropriate praise for achievement. Homework is given to reinforce and extend the work completed in class time. Strategies might now be adopted to facilitate the dissemination of these good teaching practices more uniformly across the school.

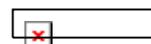
In the less successful lessons, learning objectives are not always identified or shared with the pupils at the start of the lesson. Some lessons devote too much time to their introduction and the pace is insufficiently fast to retain the attention and interest of the pupils.

Although there is an assessment policy, there is no uniform and systematic school practice. While the assessment of pupils' progress and achievements is routinely recorded and used purposely to furnish regular and good reports for parents, there is little uniform practice which uses individual and group assessment to inform lesson planning. Although there is dutiful and conscientious marking of pupils' work, the quality of marking varies. All work is basically ticked, but in the best examples of marking, additional comment by the teacher gives appropriate praise for the completed work and gives a clear indication of what the pupil needs to do to improve. Some marking provides the pupils with challenging questions. There is no school marking policy and this is a development the school should now consider.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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



The development of the pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. The pupils' spiritual development is promoted by religious education and particularly where pupils are able to explore religious issues through study of an appropriate range of world faiths, including an emphasis on Christianity. A focus on relevant festivals makes an important contribution

to the pupils' knowledge and understanding of and preparation for living in a culturally diverse society. Pupil's spiritual development, however, is only modestly enhanced through assemblies on account of a lack of opportunities for reflection and reverence.

The school places sound emphasis on the pupils' moral development. The explicit and implicit expectations in relation to personal behaviour and interpersonal relationships, are evident in the harmonious and humane environment which has been created by staff, parents and pupils together. Pupils clearly know the difference between right and wrong and how moral principles should be exercised in order to live happy and mutually respectful lives. Disputes between pupils, which are rare, are resolved through pupils being encouraged to be aware of their own feelings, the feelings of others and to be responsible for their actions. Pupils are taught polite good manners and their vital contribution to civility in human affairs. Younger pupils in the school are taught to share and act increasingly in a co-operative way with the others around them. Pupils regularly raise money for a number of charitable causes.

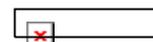
Social development is satisfactory. Pupils are provided with a number of opportunities to observe and adopt appropriate behaviour and social skills. The adults around them provide good role models for mature adult behaviour. Behaviour in the school overall is very good. There are strict rules governing pupils' movement around the school which are observed. Pupils relate well to each other and play and work together successfully. Older pupils play a role in contributing to the welfare of the school community by such tasks as the distribution of milk and the looking after of the younger pupils. For example, one Year 6 pupil read a story to pupils in the kindergarten 2 class during a wet lunchtime and this was much appreciated by the younger pupils who listened intently. The school week also regularly provides opportunities for pupils to practise and demonstrate the social skills required for performance, both in assemblies and music lessons, for example. There are few planned opportunities for pupils to develop collaborative skills by working in pairs or small groups in lessons.

The provision for cultural development is good. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to experience and to become familiar with their own and the culture of others within the culturally and linguistically diverse school community and the wider society. In the Year 1 class, for example, pupils experienced awe and wonder when they were shown a beautifully coloured and decorated sari during a discussion on Eid. Different aspects of the curriculum make a further contribution to this aspect of the pupils' development, for example, the music curriculum, together with the wide range of instruments, is rich in terms of pupils facilitating the exploration of different cultural musical traditions.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



The school makes good provision for the pupils' welfare. There are comprehensive policies for child protection, First Aid and guidelines for staff to support pupils who suffer bereavement. Policies and procedures to promote good behaviour and anti-bullying are fully implemented and effective. The policy for pupils identified as having special educational needs is detailed and meets national recommendations.

Supervision of pupils throughout the school day is properly managed and there are useful guidelines for supervision at lunchtime and break times. Staffing levels are appropriate at all times. There are three qualified First-Aiders and at least one is on the premises whenever the pupils are

on site

Provision to safeguard the pupils' health and safety is good. Appropriate fire evacuation procedures and suitable fire-fighting equipment are in place. Fire drills are held each term and the evacuation time is logged systematically. A fire risk assessment has indicated the need to take further minor precautions and these have been attended to. Pupils' safety on out-of-school educational visits is given appropriate consideration and the draft policy has due regard to national guidance.

The school's admission register meets all requirements, but attendance registers do not indicate whether absences are authorised or unauthorised by using specific codings and some alterations are not explained.

The school fulfils its duties in regard to the Disability Discrimination Act having produced a statement outlining its current position in relation to requirements.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

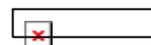
The school meets all the requirements except one.

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:

- maintain the attendance registers in accordance with current regulations; (paragraph 3(9)).

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

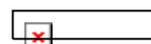


All the staff at the school have been subject to satisfactory clearance by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) at appropriate levels and to checks against List 99. The school adopts an efficient procedure for the verification of all new staff appointed to the school in relation to personal identity, health fitness, employment record, claimed professional qualifications and professional references. The school's personnel administration in this aspect is comprehensive and efficient.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The school meets all the regulations in regard to the suitability of the premises and accommodation. It provides purpose-built accommodation for all pupils and associated school activities. The main school building is in reasonably sound condition, both in terms of structure and decoration. A more recent two-storey building has been erected just a few paces from the main school. Both buildings provide very good accommodation for the current numbers of pupils and staff. The school benefits from a large hall with excellent solid wood floor, adjacent dining room and modern equipped kitchen.

Classrooms are bright and airy with attractive displays of pupils' work and other educational pictorial material. Class book collections are satisfactory with a good range of fiction and non fiction, although the condition of some volumes is poor. Classroom furniture is adequate in size and condition.

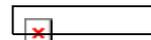
Most of the areas in the school have double glazing, good lighting and suitable teaching aids, although classrooms are not equipped for advanced ICT teaching. The second floor of the new building houses a governors' room, and a spacious music room. The latter has recently been equipped at one end with a screened, well-resourced ICT suite which has yet to be fully integrated within the school's teaching timetable.

The school benefits from a large hard play area which is adequate for the current number of pupils. Pupils in kindergarten 1 have their own hard and grassed play spaces adjacent to their classroom. The main school's hard play areas are well marked out for games and play activities. In addition, the school has two 'all weather' astro-turf pitches and a delightful garden area with lawns and a large variety of trees and shrubs. Safety considerations in relation to the use of the astro-turf pitches are reported to be dutifully adhered to by staff and pupils.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The school provides a range of good quality information to all parents and prospective parents. The informative loose-leafed prospectus ensures that information can be updated easily. In addition to the prospectus the school provides parents with a range of useful information through its Parents' Notebook which includes details about all aspects of school life. An interesting variety of information is provided through half-termly newsletters and notices. The range of information available includes details of curricular provision, staffing, trustee and governors' details. The school has recently included information on the range of policies available to parents on request.

There is an annual opportunity for parents to discuss their children's progress with class teachers. Full written school reports are sent out twice a year, as well as four half-termly summary assessments. These are of good quality. They are detailed and informative and ensure that parents are given a suitable range of information on their children's progress over the academic year. However, the current format of the annual report does not allow for pupils to express their views about their progress nor do teachers set targets for them to improve further. Parents are not encouraged to make a written response to the report. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the vast majority of parents state that they are pleased with the progress their children make and express high levels of satisfaction with the ways that they are kept informed.

There are several school events during the course of a year to which parents are welcomed. Speech Day, Sports' Day, Christmas Fair and carol concert are seen as social occasions with refreshments provided. There is no Parents' Association.

The school's open access policy for parents eases the flow of information very well. The parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with a query or suggestion and communication with them is good. The parents have access to the complaints procedure but are not informed of the number of complaints registered under this procedure. Parents are given a summary of the particulars of the academic performance of pupils during the previous academic year.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

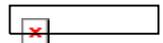
The school meets all the requirements except one.

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:

- o inform parents of the number of complaints registered under the complaints procedure during the preceding school year; (paragraph 6(2)(j)).

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

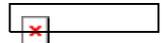


The school has recently produced a complaints policy which meets all of the requirements.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details



Name of school:	Branwood Preparatory School		
DfES ref number:	355/6004		
Type of school:	Primary Day School		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 95,	Girls 97,	Total 192
Annual fees (day pupils):	£3,744		
Address of school:	Stafford Road Monton Eccles Manchester M30 9HN		
E-mail address:	bursar@branwood.fsnet.co.uk		
Telephone number:	0161 789 1054		
Fax number:	0161 789 0561		
Headteacher:	Mr W M Howard		
Proprietor:	Branwood School Trust Limited		
Lead Inspector:	Mrs Cecile Corfield		
Dates of inspection:	8 - 11 November 2004		

