

Inspection report

Brewood Middle School

Independent special school

DfES ref no: 886/6103

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 16 - 18 January 2006

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 162A 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

The school opened in May 2005 as a junior school. Six months later, it made a successful application to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to extend to 13 years the upper age range of pupils it can admit. The school defines its intention as *'to ensure that every pupil is given a standard of education that will reinstate their sense of self-esteem, provide them with learning opportunities that are appropriate to their needs, and teach them how to conduct themselves so that they may relate to others in a socially acceptable way'*. It is owned and managed by Lynstead Children's Services. This company runs four children's homes in Kent and another special school, for pupils aged 12 to 16 years.

The school admits boys and girls who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. All pupils are in public care. They may be resident in a Lynstead home, other children's homes or with foster parents. The three pupils currently in the school span the age range eight to 11 years. They all have a history of disrupted schooling. All pupils have English as their first language. Two pupils have a statement of special educational need.

Summary of main findings

Brewood Middle School is an effective school. It is successful in meeting its aims. Pupils are taught well and make good progress. They receive a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs. The provision for promoting pupils' personal development is particularly effective, although pupils have only a limited understanding of living in a multi-cultural society. The school is conscientious in ensuring pupils' health, safety and welfare. The accommodation is in good condition and is adequate for the number and age of pupils. Parents, carers and local authorities receive most of the information the school is required to provide or make available.

What the school does well:

- it encourages pupils to develop very constructive relationships with adults;
- it develops in pupils very good attitudes and behaviour and a positive approach to learning;
- it promotes pupils' personal development effectively;
- it offers a good range and variety of learning opportunities;

- it provides a safe and supportive environment; and
- it has very thorough staff appointment and checking procedures.

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

- have full regard to its written policy to safeguard and promote the welfare of children as set out in the relevant Department for Education and Skills (DfES) guidance; and
- make available all the information detailed in section 6 of this report.

What the school must do to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002:

- devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.

Next Steps

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

- develop pupils' use of information and communication technology (ICT), including the Internet;
- improve the quality of individual education plans (IEPs); and
- promote more actively pupils' awareness and understanding of the multi-cultural nature of modern Britain.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

Pupils are given a good range of learning opportunities. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught, and each is supported by a policy document and effective planning. Curriculum planning and the school timetable show that the curriculum is balanced, with an appropriate amount of time devoted to each subject. The length of the taught week exceeds that which is recommended for this age group. The curriculum is designed to develop pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in a structured and progressive way. There is a strong emphasis on promoting all literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education. The curriculum requirements of pupils' statements of special education need are met fully. However, ICT is only a very recent addition to the curriculum. Previously, pupils have not had the opportunities to develop these skills and nor have they been able to use ICT to improve the presentation of their work. The absence of Internet access reduces pupils' ability to use ICT as a learning tool.

Pupils follow an effective personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship programme. This includes sex and relationships education, and aspects of health education such as substance abuse. Most topics are taught in discrete lessons, such as the recent session on playing safely. However, staff also seize opportunities to promote aspects of PSHE that present themselves during other lessons.

The quality of teaching and assessment

Lessons are busy and productive sessions. Effective and sometimes very good teaching ensures that pupils learn well and make good progress. The management and involvement of pupils are very striking features of all lessons. There are very strong and trusting relationships between pupils and adults, and praise and encouragement are used appropriately. These are very influential factors in enabling the teacher to provide challenging activities and to maintain very high expectations of behaviour.

Pupils respond extremely positively to the teacher's expectations. They enjoy their lessons. They have very good attitudes and follow well-established routines within the classroom. Pupils are given activities that match their age, needs and capabilities because lessons are efficiently prepared and organised. Consequently, although pupils span a relatively wide age range they all make the same good progress. Adult support is always available, but it is not given lightly. There is a consistent expectation that pupils will attempt their work independently. Other features of personal development, such as listening to others, are promoted equally thoroughly.

The teacher has a good understanding of pupils' achievements. This is obtained through a combination of standardised assessment tests and evaluations of pupils' work. This assessment information is used as the basis of IEPs, but the targets

need to more sharply focused and more easily measurable. Pupils' work is marked regularly, but annotations do not always make it clear to them exactly what they need to do in order to improve.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The school makes good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. Pupils' spiritual development is fostered well through assemblies, religious education and PSHE lessons. They are encouraged to reflect in their learning and on their behaviour. This results in a calm and orderly atmosphere throughout the school.

Pupils' moral and social development are promoted well. They are encouraged to develop an understanding of the school rules and to appreciate the difference between right and wrong. Staff maintain a good balance between a relaxed learning environment and firm discipline. They set clear boundaries and establish routines quickly. The pupils respond extremely well. They settle into the routines quickly and rapidly learn the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. Staff are rigorously consistent in their approach to managing pupils. Consequently, pupils make very good progress in developing self-control. This is especially evident in lessons and contributes greatly to the good progress that pupils make. Staff are good role models and show by example courteous behaviour and great respect for all members of the school community. Pupils learn to copy such behaviour and show respect for one another. They are polite and have a developing understanding of social conventions.

Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. They learn about their own and others' cultures and beliefs through different subjects, such as English and religious education. However, opportunities are missed to relate these studies to the multi-cultural nature of modern Britain. For instance, pupils do not visit different places of worship, and displays do not celebrate different festivals or the achievements of people from different backgrounds.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

An extensive range of detailed policies and procedures enables the school to promote successfully the welfare, health and safety of its pupils. Admission and attendance registers are maintained in the required form. Pupils are supervised closely throughout the school day. Successful implementation of the behaviour policy is an important factor in promoting pupils' very high standards of behaviour. Pupils have a good understanding of the rewards and sanctions systems. Staff work

hard to make sure that all pupils are treated fairly and have equal opportunities to develop academically and personally.

Staff make great efforts to ensure that the school is a safe place in which to learn. There is an efficiently planned programme of fire drills, and checks of escape routes and fire equipment. A detailed First Aid policy is in place, with appropriately trained First Aiders. The school has a comprehensive child protection policy, but some of its procedures and systems need reviewing. Not all staff have had recent refresher training and there is a small degree of uncertainty as to who is the named child protection officer. An appropriate policy ensures that pupils are safe and cared for when off-site on educational visits.

The school does not fulfil the requirements of the DDA. It has not yet carried out an audit and drawn up an action plan to ensure that the premises are accessible to disabled pupils, parents and visitors.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets all but one of the requirements.

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

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

- *have full regard to its written policy to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils in compliance with DfES guidance: 'Safeguarding Children in Education' (paragraph 3(2)(b)).*

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

In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA the school should:

- *devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.*

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school maintains very thorough and organised staff files. Prospective employees are vetted carefully. All necessary checks are carried out, including contact with the Criminal Records Bureau. A structured procedure ensures that applicants' identity is confirmed, referees are contacted, medical fitness to carry out the job is determined and qualification and training certificates are examined.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are satisfactory. The premises are situated down a narrow driveway at the side of a small industrial estate, next to shops and residential housing. The building was used as a nursery school up to August 2004. It is single storey and of adequate size for the proposed number of pupils. There are three separate teaching rooms and a small library area. The furniture and fittings are in good condition and are of a size that is suitable for pupils of this age group. There are sufficient washrooms for staff and pupils. If pupils are unwell, there is an area near toilets and a sink, where pupils can rest quietly, but the close proximity of the care homes means that pupils can be returned there quickly.

Recent refurbishment and redecoration have been carried out and so the accommodation is in good condition. The building is weatherproof and maintained at a good working temperature. Rooms are clean, adequately lit and ventilated, and sound insulation is effective. Floor coverings are in good condition. Outdoors there is a reasonably sized, hard play area with large fixed apparatus and a small grassed area.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

Parents, carers and local authorities receive most of the information the school is required to provide or make available. An attractively designed and presented prospectus contains much of this detail. The school's aims and ethos are spelt out clearly, and parents receive details about admissions, the curriculum and exclusions. Basic information about the school is also provided. This includes the name of the headteacher, staffing details and the proprietor's contact details. However, it fails to mention how the proprietors can be contacted at all times. The school has policies relating to bullying, child protection, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour, and sanctions adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving, but parents are not told that they can ask for this information. Similarly, prospective parents know about the very good complaints policy but they are not told how many formal complaints have been made in the previous school year.

The school is particularly responsive and diligent in providing parents and local authorities with information about pupils' progress and development. They make detailed contributions to reviews for looked after children, annual reviews of statements of educational need and personal education plan meetings. Parents are given a very informative annual report about their children's achievements. However, local authorities that fund pupils are not provided with information about how the fee for each pupil is broken down to support different elements of the school's expenditure.

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:

- *provide parents with details of the proprietors' address for correspondence during both term time and holidays, and a telephone number on which they may be contacted at all times (paragraph 6(2)(b));*
- *inform parents how they can get particulars of policies relating to bullying, child protection, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour, and sanctions that the school imposes (paragraph 6(2)(h));*
- *tell parents how they can request details of the number of formal complaints made during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j)); and*
- *make arrangements to inform local authorities of the income received and the expenditure incurred for each of the pupils they fund at the school (paragraph 6(7)).*

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

Prospective parents and pupils receive very good information about how to make a complaint. A compact but detailed leaflet explains the process very clearly. Consequently, parents know that complaints can be lodged either informally or formally. They are given clear guidance about the timescales for different stages of the process.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Brewood Middle School
DfES Number:	886/6103
Type of school:	Special school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	5 - 13 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 2 Girls: 1 Total: 3
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys: 2 Girls: 0 Total: 2
Annual fees (day pupils):	£59,752
Telephone number:	01843 597088
Email address:	admin@brewood.org
Headteacher:	Mr D Radlett
Proprietor:	Lynstead Children's Services
Reporting Inspector:	Mike Kell
Date of inspection:	16 - 18 January 2006

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