

Inspection report

Brewood Secondary School

Independent special school

DfES ref no: 886/6070

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 20 – 23 February 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

Brewood Secondary School, formerly known as Brewood Education Centre, changed in September 2005 from a middle school to a secondary day special school for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties and mild learning difficulties. The school is owned and managed by Lynstead Children's Services. The company operates children's homes in Kent and another special school.

There are currently 12 pupils on roll: six boys and six girls. All pupils have English as their first language. Seven pupils have statements of special educational need and the remainder are undergoing statutory assessments. Nearly all pupils are in public care and resident in children's homes or foster homes. All pupils are placed in the school by local authorities. Pupils' attainment is low compared with that expected for their age and all have a history of disaffection. A few pupils have more complex challenging behaviour due to autism. With its change in referrals, the school is retaining pupils for longer periods and seeks to enhance their learning through offering accredited courses. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is newly established and continues to be developed under the strong leadership of the new headteacher and senior management team.

Social attachments between pupils and staff underpin the work of the school. The philosophy and approaches are based on positive intervention in order to change behaviour with an increasing focus on achievement. The school aims to empower pupils to enable them to reach their full potential as well as to promote their integration into the wider society.

Summary of main findings

Brewood School provides a very safe and supportive environment which affords good opportunities for pupils to engage in learning, to change their behaviour and to develop their self-confidence. It meets its aims and is further developing its links with the wider community. Pupils make good progress in basic skills, and achieve well academically, although the limited opportunities for vocational courses restrict achievement in this area. Teaching is good and sometimes very good. The curriculum is highly relevant to pupils' individual needs, particularly at Key Stage 3, and it is developing well at Key Stage 4. Assessment is satisfactory with some good recently-introduced systems in place such as regular testing within subjects in order to track progress and the involvement of pupils in their own assessment. However,

individual education plan (IEP) targets are not always clear enough and teachers do not yet set targets for learning within subjects. Teamwork between support staff and teachers is strong, particularly in the management of learning and behaviour in lessons. The school provides good care, guidance and support for pupils and promotes their personal development effectively. Parents, carers and local authorities receive a good level of information from the school on the progress of pupils.

What the school does well:

- there are very good specialist facilities for information and communication technology (ICT), science, art and food technology, which enhance teaching and learning;
- there is a strong emphasis on the development of speaking and listening skills enabling pupils with poor concentration and challenging behaviour to make very good progress in communication;
- a good academic curriculum, particularly the inclusion of Spanish, enables pupils to achieve well in a wide range of subjects;
- the quality of teaching is good and promotes effective learning and achievement;
- strong team work between teachers, support staff and the behaviour co-ordinator results in the effective management of behaviour ; and
- staff provide very good care and support for pupils so they feel safe, secure and happy at school.

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

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill.

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

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

- develop and implement a three-year plan to improve access to the curriculum and the premises.

Next Steps

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

- continue to develop the use of ICT to support teaching and learning in all subjects;
- further extend the work-related learning and vocational curriculum; and
- continue to improve the systems for assessment

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good in Year 9, where it is broad and balanced, enabling pupils to make good progress. However, because the curriculum has only been in place for Years 10 and 11 since September 2005 as the school changes focus, it is still developing so that overall the curriculum is satisfactory. The requirements of the National Curriculum are well covered, including the successful teaching of Spanish as a modern foreign language, supplemented by lessons in food technology and business studies.

In the upper years there is insufficient emphasis on vocational courses and the school is looking to develop courses such as Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT), business studies and food technology, and entry level qualifications in a range of subjects. There is also insufficient work-related learning and, while a start has been made in linking with the Connexions service, there is further work to be done to extend careers education. At the moment there is too great a focus on General Certificate of Education (GCSE) courses to the detriment of the vocational aspect of the 14 – 19 curriculum. Guidelines and materials produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) form the basis for much of the work covered, and they are used effectively. Pupils believe that they are making good progress and this is confirmed by the National Curriculum test results they obtained at the end of Year 9, which showed good progress based on prior attainment.

A strong feature of the curriculum is the concentration on the development of speaking and listening skills. Pupils in a range of settings showed an ability to listen to and reflect on the ideas of others and to contribute well to discussions. This was exemplified in a discussion on homelessness in an English lesson. There were also good examples of the curriculum providing opportunity for pupils to confront their own emotions. This was seen in an art lesson where pupils were discussing their feelings on anger and happiness. It is also a feature of the circle time in which the school community assembles together at the start and end of the school day. Writing skills are promoted effectively, for example through the insistence in science that correct terminology is used and in food technology where evaluations are written using complex sentences.

The curriculum is tailored to the needs of individuals as reflected in their statements and individual education and behaviour plans. The delivery of the curriculum is a team effort, with very effective working between the four members of the teaching staff, the four learning support assistants and the behaviour co-ordinator. This is a real strength of the school. Extra-curricular activities, such as the popular ICT club, are provided during the lunch break. Opportunities to use the art room and library facilities are also taken up by pupils at these times.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching is good, with some very good features. As a result, pupils learn effectively and make good progress academically and in their personal development. Teachers maintain very good relationships with pupils and make effective use of praise and feedback on progress so that pupils listen to staff and try hard in lessons. Pupils say their teachers help them when they get stuck and say that they like their teachers. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan their lessons well so that tasks are matched closely to individual pupils' needs. Consequently, pupils learn new skills quickly in lessons. Teachers' focus on speaking and listening through skilled question and answer sessions is a particular strength of teaching. This not only enhances literacy and communication skills but also greatly improves pupils' personal development as they learn to take turns and respect other's views.

Lessons are nearly always brisk and lively, and teachers collaborate very effectively with support assistants to promote learning. However in a very small number of lessons, the pace is too slow so that pupils become bored.

Resources for practical subjects are satisfactory overall, and are particularly good in art, and design and technology. There are ICT resources of high quality in the new ICT suite, which are greatly enjoyed by pupils. However teachers are not yet using ICT sufficiently in classrooms to promote teaching and learning within subjects.

Assessment is satisfactory overall. New systems for assessing, monitoring and recording pupils' attainment and progress have been introduced using GCSE and National Curriculum levels. These have yet to be embedded in practice and applied consistently across the school. Teachers make good use of the new points system for rewarding behaviour in lessons. However, there is no equivalent system for rewarding academic achievement. Pupils' academic progress is monitored closely through regular testing at the end of units of work. This is relatively new and is beginning to show how much progress pupils make over time. The school is also introducing a commercial electronic system of recording individual pupils' progress but not all staff are fully aware how to use this yet. The headteacher has rightly identified the need to sharpen target setting and to develop a more coherent system for tracking and analysing pupils' progress. Statutory requirements for statements are met and parents, carers and pupils have good opportunities to attend reviews and make their own contributions to the assessment process. Although targets are set in IEPs, they are often too vague and it is therefore difficult to judge how much progress pupils are making against these targets. Nevertheless, these are reviewed regularly with pupils, teachers and support staff, who make use of the outcomes for planning the next stage of learning.

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 students.

Spiritual development is encouraged through daily assemblies, which also provide opportunities for the pupils to take an element of responsibility in choosing the day's faith song and in handing out the cards containing the school prayer. The whole school community participate well, singing with enthusiasm and sharing experiences through the associated circle time in which all take part.

Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions through a code of conduct and reward system. They are able to consider the feelings and needs of others. Pupils feel safe, believing that the school has created an environment in which they are cared for and supported. Citizenship lessons provide opportunities to consider issues relating to the wider community in which the pupils live. The staff are aware of child protection procedures.

Social skills are developed not only through the formal curriculum, but also through events such as eating together at lunchtime and sharing responsibilities for clearing up. The concentration on developing speaking and listening skills enables the pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour and to understand the views of others. Through showing regard for the views of others they develop self-esteem and self-confidence.

Opportunities are taken to introduce different cultures to the pupils, as in lessons in food technology where the origins of couscous and chillies were discussed, and in art, where pupils had made African masks which formed part of a classroom display.

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 welfare, health and safety of its pupils, and its published policies are detailed and well considered.

There is a clear policy on bullying which is reinforced around the school with posters. The pupils say that the school takes firm action when any evidence of bullying is found. Carers are notified and incidents are recorded in a designated file. Child protection training is provided for all staff and the head teacher acts as the designated officer. The parent company has a training officer who undertakes training for staff on a nationally recognised model for the use of physical restraint. This technique is based firmly on the avoidance of restraint and the implementation of positive behaviour modification wherever possible. This fits with the ethos of the school, which is now moving to a system based more firmly on praise and reward as the means of promoting good behaviour. Pupils are encouraged to think about their

behaviour and to accept responsibility for it, with the support of staff including the recently appointed behaviour co-ordinator when needed, and this is working well.

There is a clear behaviour policy based on a six-point reward model, supplemented by bonus points awarded by teachers to pupils who achieve something exceptional. This works effectively and is well understood by the students. When it is necessary to impose sanctions on pupils for serious disciplinary offences, these are recorded, as are any exclusions and physical interventions.

Risk assessments for the buildings and teaching materials, for visits out of school and for the care of individual pupils are satisfactory and are being further strengthened. Rooms with potential hazards, such as the science practical room and food technology room, are kept locked when not in use, as are individual cupboards within the rooms. The First Aid policy is satisfactory. The school has current fire safety certification and a record is kept of checks on equipment and fire drills. Admission and attendance registers are kept and administered satisfactorily.

The school has not complied with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) by producing an access plan.

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 and implement a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the curriculum and of the premises.*

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

Selection and recruitment procedures are thorough and rigorous. All essential checks are made for both proprietors and staff. These include enhanced checks with the Criminal Records Bureau.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The classrooms are light and airy, providing very good accommodation for teaching and learning. There are also very good specialist rooms for science, art, food technology and ICT, and these are used well. They enhance the quality of the teaching and are appreciated by the pupils. Throughout the school the furniture and floor coverings are of good quality. All the rooms are well decorated and provide very good learning environments. The building is well maintained.

The school lacked a sick room at the time of its last inspection, and this has not yet been provided.

There are no changing or shower facilities, but games and physical education lessons take place in the nearby park.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets nearly all of the requirements for registration.

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

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

- *provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill (paragraph 5(l)).*

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

The school provides a good range of information for parents and local authorities through a new prospectus, which summarises the policies and procedures. This includes emergency contact numbers for the proprietor, a detailed complaints procedure and a complete breakdown of income and expenditure incurred by the school for pupils. Pupils also benefit from their own prospectus which includes essential information to promote their interests and well-being such as advice on advocacy and support should they wish to make a complaint. Parents receive detailed and informative annual reports on their children's progress. Parents and pupils also have the opportunity to attend the annual reviews of statements, IEP reviews and 'Looked After Children' reviews.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

Parents, carers and pupils benefit from detailed information about how to make a complaint. There are clear timescales for dealing with complaints. The appeals procedure is well conceived.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SCHOOL DETAILS

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| Name of school: | Brewood Secondary School |
| DfES Number: | 886/6070 |
| Type of school: | Secondary school for students with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties and mild learning difficulties |
| Status: | Independent special |
| Age range of pupils: | 11 -16 years |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| Number on roll (full-time pupils): | Boys: 6 Girls: 6 Total: 12 |
| Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need: | Boys: 4 Girls: 3 Total: 7 |
| Annual fees (day pupils): | £22,757 |
| Address of school: | 86 London Road Deal Kent CT14 9TR |
| Telephone number: | 01304 363000 |
| Fax number: | 01304 363099 |
| Email address: | admin@brewood.org |
| Headteacher: | Mr Daniel Radlett |
| Proprietor: | Mr John Baker, Lynstead Children's Services |
| Reporting Inspector: | Mr Declan McCarthy |
| Date of inspection: | 20 – 23 February 2006 |

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