

Inspection report

Belgrave School

Independent special school

DfES ref no: 801/6019

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 25 - 26 April 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

Belgrave School is a small independent day special school for boys and girls aged 6 – 12 years. It provides full-time and some part-time education for pupils with dyslexia and a variety of related learning difficulties. It is situated in a large Victorian house in Clifton overlooking Bristol Downs. There are 23 pupils on roll of whom 21 are boys. About a third of the pupils have statements of special educational needs and several travel significant distances each day to attend.

Summary of main findings

Belgrave School aims to deliver a comprehensive programme of education and to help pupils to become more confident and proud of their achievements. It is very successful in this aim. Many pupils who have previously experienced failure achieve success, especially in reading and spelling. They become much more confident about their learning. The curriculum provided for pupils is generally suitable and teaching is satisfactory. The individual support given to pupils by teachers and teaching assistants is good. The school does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop cultural awareness and to help them become more knowledgeable about the work-related curriculum and aspects of personal and health education. Parents are very happy with the school. The school has well-documented procedures and policies but there are some aspects of the premises, welfare, health and safety that require attention in order to meet all the requirements.

What the school does well:

- pupils become much more confident in their learning;
- pupils develop their self-esteem and experience success;
- pupils make good progress in reading and spelling; and
- teachers know their pupils well and provide good individual support.

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

- broaden the curriculum as detailed in sections 1 and 2 of this report;
- attend to the welfare, health and safety issues identified in section 3; and

- improve the suitability of the premises as detailed in section 5.

Next Steps

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

- improve the detail of short-term planning to show clear learning objectives for pupils in all lessons; and
- create planned opportunities for teachers to develop pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The curriculum covers most subjects in the National Curriculum. There is a strong daily focus on literacy and numeracy in order to meet the needs of the pupils, many of whom are dyslexic and have complex learning difficulties. There is a curriculum year-plan that is supported by suitable schemes of work. Teachers also use national guidance for literacy and numeracy, the National Curriculum, commercial schemes and a computer-aided-learning program developed by the associated Dyslexia Centre. These materials help to provide suitable continuity in learning. Music is not taught but there are plans to introduce a music club soon. There is insufficient provision for practical age-appropriate activities in subjects such as science for older pupils. A local sports centre is used to provide pupils with additional opportunities for physical education. No specific extra-curricular activities are offered but the school uses its minibus to make day visits to local places of interest which support various areas of the curriculum including science, history, and religious education.

Pupils with statements of special educational need have clear individual education plans that relate to their needs. These plans are used to prepare pupils' tasks and are evaluated regularly. The requirements to provide information for local authority annual reviews of statements are met.

All pupils follow specific individual programmes for reading, phonic awareness, spelling and comprehension. Pupils make good progress with reading, spelling and listening skills. They make satisfactory progress in writing for a range of purposes, for example instructions, narrative and poetry. Progress in mathematics, especially arithmetic, is more variable but is satisfactory overall. Opportunities to develop writing and pupils' individual expression across subjects such as geography, history and science are too limited. Therefore there are fewer chances to use the literacy skills that pupils are developing. Sometimes a heavy reliance on worksheets limits how pupils respond to tasks. Recently, pupils have successfully completed homework research assignments about the Tudors. Most pupils used the Internet and other information and communication technology skills for information and for presentation.

The school does not provide work-related learning for the older pupils. There is a scheme of work for personal and social education that helps pupils to develop social skills and self-awareness. Through science lessons pupils develop an awareness of healthy living. There is, however, no clear plan for systematically providing sex education and for teaching about substance abuse. There are regular opportunities for pupils to talk about their feelings and to express their views on a range of matters, which they do openly and confidently.

Pupils make very good progress in their learning skills and attitudes to study. The school is very successful in developing self-esteem and provides pupils with opportunities for success when previously they may have had little. Pupils are very

clear about the progress that they have made in this aspect of their development although they are not always clear about their targets and next steps.

The quality of teaching and assessment

Teaching is satisfactory overall, and a significant amount is good. Teachers know their pupils very well and develop very good relationships with them. Pupils are managed well and there is much mutual respect which leads to good behaviour. Teachers and teaching assistants pay due regard to pupils' individual education plans and statements. Teachers' understanding of pupils' needs is enhanced through additional training in specific learning difficulties.

Lesson planning is satisfactory although it lacks some detail in specific learning objectives. Teachers and teaching assistants are well prepared and ensure that pupils follow various programmes of study related to developing reading, phonics and spelling skills. The programmes used ensure that pupils make systematic and monitored progress, carefully building on previous knowledge. They help pupils establish routines and pupils have a good understanding of how well they are doing. However, the system is rigid at times and therefore lacks some imagination and spontaneity. The least effective lessons do not have a sufficiently clear focus on what pupils are to learn.

There is very good teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants and this enhances the good individual support that pupils receive. Teachers regularly use standardised tests to monitor and ensure progress in reading and spelling. Evaluation of pupils' progress towards the targets in their individual plans is undertaken diligently.

A good rapport between adults and pupils creates an atmosphere where pupils feel confident to put forward their views and ideas in discussions. It also gives them the self-assurance to ask for help when it is needed. Most of the time pupils get on well with their tasks and are willing to do their best.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets most but not all of the requirements.

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

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

- *improve the curriculum provision for secondary age pupils to include activities and studies that are work related and develop the practical content of subjects to include age-appropriate activities (paragraph 1(2)(b));*
- *ensure that the curriculum includes planned opportunities for pupils to receive sex education and to learn about substance abuse (paragraph 1(2)(f)); and*
- *provide age-appropriate careers guidance for secondary-aged pupils (paragraph 1(2)(g)).*

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

The social and moral development of the pupils is good. The school is very successful in the way it builds up the self-knowledge, self-esteem and the self-confidence of its pupils. By the time they leave, they appreciate the nature of the difficulties that they have and through the effectiveness of the teaching and provision have come to experience success.

Pupils develop a sense of right and wrong in a variety of settings. This is reinforced by the behaviour and discipline policies, which are based on a clear rationale of why some things are acceptable, and others are unacceptable. Teachers and teaching assistants use social skills groups and circle-time to help pupils reinforce positive elements of behaviour and to develop a sense of right and wrong. Through this, and through the expectations of adults, pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour. Some of the pupils find co-operation, team work and mutual support difficult concepts to understand and to put into practice and the school works hard to achieve its success in developing pupils' social responsibility.

Pupils discuss social and interpersonal relationships in circle-time. They develop a sense of caring for each other which is supported by the clear expectations of the school. As a consequence of the emergence of these attitudes there is a feeling of calm in lessons and a mutual respect between individuals. This incidentally supports the development of some aspects of spirituality but there are few planned opportunities for reflection either individually or in class and school groups.

Knowledge of other faiths such as Sikhism, Islam and Hinduism is taught through history, geography and religious education and pupils have had visits to the sacred buildings of other faiths. There is no clear planning to help develop pupils' broader awareness of issues about racial harmony and tolerance and insufficient opportunities exist to develop knowledge of public services and institutions.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets most but not all of the requirements.

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:

- improve the opportunities for pupils to learn about public institutions and services in England (paragraph 2(d)); and*
- develop pupils' broader cultural awareness (paragraph 2(e)).*

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school has a satisfactory range of policies and procedures which pay due regard to national recommendations although there are a number of unsatisfactory elements in the actual practice.

Guidance on bullying, behaviour and sanctions is clear and understood by pupils. The school undertakes very diligently its duties in supervision of pupils within school, on visits and during the frequent movements to and from the open space that is used for sport and other recreational activities. There are always sufficient adults supervising pupils.

Risk assessments are completed satisfactorily although there are some issues of health and safety that need to be attended to regarding the premises. Fire drills are regularly undertaken and appropriately recorded.

Although there are clear school policies for First Aid and child protection, the actual provision is unsatisfactory. Staff have not been trained in child protection procedures and the coordinator has not had enhanced inter-agency training. Similarly, no member of staff has the required First Aid training.

Procedures for completing attendance registers are unsatisfactory. There is no set time when registers are marked for morning and afternoon sessions and alterations are not completed in such a way that the original entry is clear. The admission register is unsatisfactory because it does not contain all the information it should regarding previous schools attended by pupils. Alterations made are inappropriate.

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 all staff receive training in child protection and that the co-ordinator attends enhanced inter-agency training (paragraph 3(2)(b));*
- ensure that the designated First Aider has a current training certificate (paragraph 3(6)); and*
- maintain the admission and attendance registers in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 (paragraph 3(9)).*

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

Although there are no written procedures for appointing staff the processes used are satisfactory. All adults have had suitable criminal records checks regarding their suitability to work with pupils and have completed self-certificated medical checks.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The school is situated in a large attractive detached house. It shares these premises with the Bristol Dyslexia Centre although the schoolrooms are largely separate.

The interior and exterior of the premises are in good condition. Classroom sizes are suitable for the numbers of pupils on roll. Furniture and fittings are appropriate and the environment is enhanced by attractive and informative displays including pupils' writing and artwork. There are no specialist facilities for subjects such as science and design and technology but there are computers in each room giving good access to information and communication technology.

The current arrangements for washrooms and toilets are unsatisfactory and the school is making immediate plans to rectify this. There is no clear designation of staff and pupils' toilets and two toilets, outside the otherwise specific school room area, need to be used in order to meet the requirements for the number and age of boys and girls on roll.

One room has recently been designated as a medical room, which is away from the main schoolrooms. While this room fully meets the regulations, it requires specific supervision.

The playground area is very small. The school makes the best use of this area by splitting the pupils into two groups with different break times and these arrangements are satisfactory. An additional grass play area is available in a public open space opposite the school. This area is used to good effect when the weather is suitable both at lunchtimes and for physical education lessons.

Not all areas of the school are safe. The classroom windows do not have suitable glazing or appropriate stops to prevent them opening wide and the grill to cover a gap between the playground and the basement area is insecure.

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 no areas of the school compromise pupils' safety (paragraph 5(j)); and*
- *ensure that washroom facilities meet the requirements of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(k)).*

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

Most parents believe that the information they receive from the school is good. They contact the school formally and informally on a regular basis, especially at the start

and end of the day. Parents receive a full information pack and other documents and policies are readily available from the school. The information sets out clearly the aims and ethos of the school. An informative written annual report of pupils' progress is given to parents at the end of each year.

The school makes available information regarding the funding of pupils with statements to their funding authorities and fully meets the requirements for giving information about these pupils for the authorities' annual reviews.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The school has a satisfactory policy and procedures for hearing complaints. The school has not yet had to use the procedures but is fully aware that any complaints need to be recorded.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Belgrave School
DfES Number:	801/6019
Type of school:	Special
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	6 – 12 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 20 Girls: 2 Total: 22
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys: 0 Girls: 1 Total: 1
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys: 7 Girls: 0 Total: 7
Annual fees (day pupils):	£5,700
Address of school:	10 Upper Belgrave Road Clifton Bristol BS8 2XH
Telephone number:	0117 9743133
Fax number:	0117 9239703
Email address:	info@belgrave-school.org
School Manager:	Mrs S Bannister
Proprietor:	Mrs P Jones
Reporting Inspector:	Mr D Towl HMI
Date of inspection:	25 – 26 April 2006

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