

**Inspection report**  
**Moon Hall School for Dyslexic Children**  
**Independent special school**  
**DfES ref no: 936/6551**

**Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002**

**Dates of inspection:**

**8 - 11 May 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**

Moon Hall School is a specialist day school administered through the Moon Hall charity. It is registered with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) for pupils aged 7 to 13 who have specific learning difficulties (dyslexia). There are currently 53 full time pupils. It is also a registered member of CreSTeD (Council for the Registration of Schools Teaching Dyslexic Pupils). The school provides an enriched curriculum for children who have been assessed as having dyslexia. Around three quarters of the pupils have also been assessed as needing speech and language therapy. Pupils usually enter the school either in Year 3 or in Years 5 and 6, most having previously attended other independent schools. There is a small number of pupils who have statements of special educational need; currently no pupils are funded by their local authority.

The school is situated on a large rural site near Dorking which it shares with Belmont Preparatory School. It aims to offer a specialist school within a mainstream environment. Full-time pupils from Moon Hall attend some lessons at Belmont School and share facilities. Similarly, 43 former full-time Moon Hall pupils, who are based in Belmont, continue to be taught English in small groups at Moon Hall by teachers who have specialist qualifications to teach dyslexic pupils. In addition, 22 pupils from Belmont receive individual tuition at Moon Hall to help address their mild specific learning difficulties. The school has an arrangement with Belmont for some of its pupils to board there. This arrangement is entirely supervised by Belmont School and not part of this inspection.

On entry pupils are usually working significantly below the expected level for their age. The school aims to ensure that pupils attain literacy skills in line with their ability and achieve their academic potential. It places great importance on boosting their confidence and self-esteem.

### **Summary of main findings**

Moon Hall School is a very effective school which provides outstanding support for pupils who have dyslexia. The principal, headteacher, governors and staff are all highly committed to meeting the school's stated aims and these are met successfully. As a result of consistently good teaching the pupils make good progress across the curriculum. The extremely high quality teaching they receive in English ensures they make excellent progress in literacy. Pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence increase significantly as a result of the support they receive from all staff. The school's relationship with Belmont School is highly successful and enhances the curriculum by providing specialist teaching rooms, excellent facilities

for sport and play and the opportunity to be part of a wider school community. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their education at the school and their behaviour is exemplary. There are excellent relationships between staff and pupils.

**What the school does well:**

- it provides a curriculum specifically designed to meet the needs of pupils with dyslexia which enables them to make excellent progress in literacy and good progress overall;
- it promotes an ethos which ensures pupils enjoy all aspects of their education;
- it successfully promotes pupils' self-esteem and encourages them to be independent;
- It provides consistently good teaching and thorough assessment of pupils' learning in literacy and numeracy; and
- its unique relationship with Belmont School enhances the school's provision considerably.

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

- provide particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language; and
- include in its annual written reports to parents (unless otherwise agreed with any parent) information about the progress and attainment of each registered child in all the main subject areas taught.

**Next Steps**

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

- increase the range of programs and availability of equipment to further develop pupils' experiences of information and communication technology (ICT); and
- consider forming a school council to give pupils more formal opportunities to raise concerns and help shape the development of 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 good and well-structured curriculum which is tailored to meet the individual needs of both full- and part-time pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3. This enables all pupils to both enjoy school and achieve. There is full access to the National Curriculum, with the exception of a modern foreign language, and access to religious education. The lack of a modern foreign language has not been a barrier to pupils who move on to other independent schools at the age of 13. The curriculum policy is clear and the school is increasingly making cross-curricular links which help to reinforce pupils' learning, for example by using literacy skills in other subjects. Planning for the curriculum is thorough, and consistent within subject areas. The excellent English curriculum has a strong and appropriate emphasis on improving pupils' literacy skills and uses a commercial scheme as its foundation. The school has reviewed its scheme of work for mathematics and introduced more problem-solving activities to help address the linguistic difficulties which hinder pupils' progress in this subject. The curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) includes citizenship and covers a good range of topics, including personal safety and being healthy. The use of specialist accommodation at Belmont School improves Moon Hall's ability to offer the full range of practical subjects and to cover a wide range of topics. Close liaison between the staff of the schools ensures continuity and consistency for pupils, for example by developing a common handwriting policy.

The curriculum is enriched by a good programme of visits to the school by speakers and by external visits, for example to the Imperial War Museum when studying World War 2. Fiction and reference libraries provide a wide range of appropriate books but no magazines for pupils' personal reading. Older pupils also benefit from access to the library at Belmont. There is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities provided by Belmont which are popular with all children. These activities, which change each term, include a range of sporting activities, and the opportunity to be part of school teams and experience other activities such as drama and making scrapbooks.

Around three quarters of the pupils have additional speech and language difficulties and others experience difficulties with co-ordination. The work of the speech and language therapist and the occupational therapist are central to the work of the school and make a very good contribution to the curriculum and to the progress made by the pupils.

The school has recently taken over the supervision of homework for its full-time pupils. This provides consistency and good support for pupils, who are very happy with the arrangement and feel that it helps them to complete homework successfully.

Currently only two pupils have statements of special educational need, to which no local authority funding is attached. The school works closely with local authorities as required and ensures they receive copies of reviews of pupils' statements.

The school places due importance on preparing its pupils for adult life and equipping them with the skills to achieve economic well-being, for example through an emphasis on core skills, including typing, and by providing opportunities for them to work collaboratively and to be part of teams. Letters from past pupils show that they go on to be successful either in higher education or in employment.

### **The quality of teaching and assessment**

The overall quality of teaching is good. The teaching of literacy is outstanding as a result of high expectations, careful planning and assessment.

The teachers consistently and effectively apply the same method to develop pupils' literacy skills. This structured approach enables the pupils to make significant gains in reading which also improves their learning in other subjects. The pupils are encouraged to write, while good quality oral dialogue is achieved in most lessons. Teachers make very good use of question and answer sessions to ensure pupils have understood, as well as providing them with the opportunity to contribute their own ideas and knowledge.

Relationships between staff and pupils are very strong. The pupils appreciate the work that teachers, therapists and support staff do for them. One pupil said: *'The teachers are determined to see my reading improve and they don't give up.'* The enthusiasm that pupils bring to their learning also contributes to their achievement.

Relationships between pupils are excellent. They are quick to recognise the achievements of others and willing to offer help where appropriate. They readily suggest answers, safe in the knowledge that they will not be teased if they are wrong.

Teamwork is a strong feature of teaching at the school. The expertise and subject specialist knowledge of Belmont staff are used to good effect. The teachers at Moon Hall are also well supported by teaching assistants whose work adds significantly to the quality of provision. Some of these assistants also teach and take on a range of responsibilities, including for ICT. Part-time, visiting therapists liaise very effectively with staff and parents. All staff have strong organisational abilities which enable them to work in rooms where space is often at a premium.

The pace and variation in teaching methods ensures that pupils are challenged well by the range of tasks they are expected to undertake. Teachers make good use of whole class, small group, pair and individual work. All teachers make satisfactory use of interactive whiteboards. Particularly effective use is made when pupils input information and when appropriate interactive websites have been researched before the lesson.

Assessment of learning in literacy and numeracy is undertaken meticulously. Because of this, the school has a clear understanding of the effectiveness of teaching. In lessons, teachers show a good understanding of pupils' attainment and use this knowledge to plan further learning. Assessment of learning in other subjects is less precise.

Frequent reports are compiled and these indicate that pupils make good progress. The work done by pupils is marked consistently and often includes encouraging comments as well as specific guidance as to how to improve. In addition to the formal reports, the teachers also keep a 'progress book', a portfolio of work which indicates milestones of progress.

The resources used in lessons are of good quality, sufficient quantity and used effectively. Teachers go to considerable lengths to provide 'real-life' reading sources such as newspaper cuttings and leaflets for local events that give the pupils added interest to read for meaning. The availability of only one digital camera for the school reduces spontaneity in capturing pupils' achievements. Classroom walls are frequently adorned with pupils' work, indicating how their achievements are valued. Computers are used to support learning in literacy and mathematics, mostly through use of drill and practice programs including typing tutors. There are too few opportunities to widen the use of ICT, for example by using spreadsheets, databases and programmable toys.

***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 pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is highly successful in increasing the self-esteem and self-confidence of pupils. The school has a Christian ethos and shares its collective worship with Belmont School. These assemblies, which include prayer, make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual development. There is little time for reflection during the school day but pupils are appreciative of the beautiful grounds in which the school is situated. The curriculum for religious education, and some parts of the PSHE curriculum help pupils to understand the religious beliefs and customs of other faith groups.

The school has a very strong moral ethos. The rules and expectations of the school are set out clearly. Rewards, in the form of stars, are linked to the House system shared with Belmont and this motivates pupils to do their best for themselves and their House. The school promotes equality of opportunity and respect for all very well and staff provide good role models. A very good example of promoting the need to consider others is seen on a form notice board on which pupils note their actions in response to the question: "What have you done today to help someone else?" Pupils are confident that in the rare circumstance of any bullying taking place their concerns will be treated seriously.

There are very good opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills both with their peers in Moon Hall and in the wider community of Belmont. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are considerate to each other, staff and visitors; they engage readily in conversation and are keen to be helpful. There are good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility as monitors and form captains, and they are able to make their views known about school life informally. However the school does not have a school council as a formal route for pupils' contributions.

The school provides a good range of cultural experiences for pupils, such as the work on Aboriginal art. Pupils study the work of great artists and the music and dance of other cultures. They make visits to the local church and to Guildford Cathedral. The school raises money for charities such as *World Vision* and contributes to local Harvest Festival arrangements.

All parents surveyed agree that their children like the school, that they were helped to settle in and that behaviour is good. Similarly almost all agree that staff treat children fairly and with respect and that the school helps them to become more mature and take responsibility. One parent said the school '*really takes children's happiness seriously*' and another said: '*This is a very special school. It encourages the children to learn and every message is positive.*'

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

### **3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils**

Pupils' welfare and well-being are safeguarded consistently. The quality of care and concern afforded to each pupil is good. The small number of pupils means that they receive very good levels of attention and supervision from staff. Pupils appear very happy to be at the school. Informal discussions and interviews with them and the responses of their parents to the pre-inspection questionnaire confirm this.

All policies to support the procedures by which the school looks after its pupils are in place and will be reviewed as required later this year. Health and safety are given appropriate priority and the school is quick to remedy any issues which arise. There is good provision for First Aid, supported by a recently revised policy and by access to the matron at Belmont School. There are secure procedures which record fire-alarm testing and which ensure that electrical equipment meets safety requirements.

There is a nominated person for child protection matters and all staff have undertaken recent training to raise their awareness. Risk assessments have been carried out thoroughly, including procedures for activities and excursions off-site. Parental permission is always sought and received prior to activities. Supervision of pupils is appropriate at all times.

Attendance and admission registers are maintained correctly and incidents properly recorded. The school's behaviour policy is clear and pupils understand what is required and know the rewards and sanctions.

Following an audit, the school has recently devised a plan to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

#### **4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff**

The school has a well qualified and experienced staff of teachers and teaching assistants. Their work is very well supported by teachers at Belmont School and a range of qualified therapists. Employment procedures are the responsibility of Moon Hall and there are thorough procedures for checking the identity, fitness, qualifications and employment history of school staff before they take up their appointment. Character references and professional references are also sought. Staff are informed that their appointment depends on gaining enhanced clearance from the Criminal Records Bureau. Relevant documents and copies of evidence used for staff selection are stored securely in staff files. However, a few staff files do not contain all the information that supported their initial application. Because of the arrangement with Belmont, the schools have recently put in place procedures to confirm the suitability of the Belmont staff who teach Moon Hall pupils.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

#### **5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation**

Moon Hall School is well maintained and suitable for its purpose.

There are seven teaching rooms upstairs and three downstairs; rooms are of varying size and sometimes space is limited. However, teaching frequently takes place in small groups. An ICT suite and a small library area are located on the upper level of the building. An additional annex of two small classrooms provides areas for teaching part-time pupils from Belmont School and for occasional use by therapists. All accommodation is appropriately used and in good condition.

The facilities at Belmont make a major contribution to Moon Hall's facilities. Specialist art and science rooms are located within Belmont. There are good facilities for all subjects and there is excellent provision for physical education.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

#### **6. The quality of information for parents and other partners**

The school provides good information for parents about the school and about its arrangements with Belmont School, both in the prospectus and on its very helpful website. It meets almost all of the regulations. It does not state how it addresses the needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language. A wide range of specialist information about dyslexia is available in the Parents' Room, and parents are able to borrow the good range of books and videos available. There are also helpful leaflets which explain the results of standardised tests used to assess pupils. The school carries out its own surveys of parents and responds openly to any expressed concerns. In response to a questionnaire sent as part of the inspection,



parents confirm that they are happy to approach the school if they have any concerns.

There are two formal parents' evenings each year and other opportunities for parents to talk to staff, including visiting therapists. There are also social occasions and the annual speech day where parents can meet with staff.

The school provides two reports each year for parents which record in detail their child's progress and attainment in English and mathematics but which provide insufficient detail about the attainment and progress pupils make in other areas of the curriculum. Individual education plans, which have a strong focus on English and mathematics, are reviewed with pupils and parents annually.

No pupils are currently receiving funding from their local authority but the school sends copies of statement reviews to the relevant local authorities.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

*The school meets all but two of the regulations.*

***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 particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language (paragraph 6(2)(f)); and*
- include in its annual written reports to parents (unless otherwise agreed with any parent) information about the progress and attainment of each registered child in all the main subject areas taught. (paragraph 6(5)).*

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

The school has a complaints policy which fully meets the requirements of the regulations. It is made available in the parents' handbook, in the parents' information area and in the entrance lobby to the school.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

*Yes.*

## SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Moon Hall School for Dyslexic Children			
DfES Number:	936/6551			
Type of school:	Special			
Status:	Independent			
Age range of pupils:	7 – 13 years			
Gender of pupils:	Mixed			
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 42	Girls: 11	Total: 53	
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys: 38	Girls: 5	Total: 43	
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys: 0	Girls: 2	Total: 2	
Annual fees (day pupils):	£9,720 - £14,580			
Annual fees (boarders):	£13,860 - £18,720			
Address of school:	Feldemore Pasturewood Road Holmbury St Mary Dorking Surrey RH5 6LQ			
Telephone number:	01306 731464			
Fax number:	01306 731504			
Email address:	enquiries@moonhallschool.co.uk			
Headteacher:	Mrs Pamela Loré			
Proprietor:	Moon Hall School Charity			
Reporting Inspector:	Mrs Pauline Allison HMI			
Date of inspection:	8 - 11 May 2006			

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