

## **Inspection report**

### **Moon Hall College and Burys Court School**

**Independent school**

**DfES ref no: 936/6251**

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

**Dates of inspection: 30 October – 2 November 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 College and Burys Court School is situated near Reigate in Surrey. It was founded in 1957 as Burys Court Preparatory School. It is co-educational and takes pupils from the age of 2 to 16. In 2005 the school was purchased by Moon Hall Schools Educational Trust, the trustees of which act as proprietors of the school. At present, the school is led and managed by a principal and a newly appointed headteacher. The school has a total of 71 pupils. The school nursery provision, called 'Little Berries', has 14 children funded under the Government's Nursery Scheme.

Moon Hall Schools Educational Trust specialises in providing education for pupils with specific learning difficulties and, since taking over Burys Court School, has established three classes for severely dyslexic pupils. Three pupils have statements of special educational needs.

The school is housed in a large Victorian building, with a range of smaller additional buildings in the grounds, which are used for the nursery, a gymnasium and a technology workshop. The new proprietors have carried out extensive repairs and redecoration works since taking over the school. The school is surrounded by pleasant grounds, which include sports fields and suitable recreation areas.

The aims of the school are as follows:

- to ensure the children have the best possible start to their school lives;
- to provide a safe and caring environment;
- to encourage self-discipline, responsibility, good manners and thoughtfulness for others;
- to establish sound work habits and enable each child to achieve his or her potential; and
- to offer a wide range of activities through which children can discover and develop their skills and aptitudes.

### **Summary of main findings**

Moon Hall College and Burys Court School is an improving school. The curriculum is broad and balanced, although insufficient attention is given to careers education. Teaching is good overall and is outstanding in the 'Little Berries' nursery. Pupils' personal development is good. The school gives a high priority to the welfare of the pupils, who are well cared for in its family atmosphere. Although a great deal of work has been done to the premises, a number of further necessary improvements were

identified during the inspection, including some which compromise aspects of health and safety.

**What the school does well:**

- the 'Little Berries' nursery is a strength of the school;
- the identification and diagnosis of pupils with specific learning difficulties is very detailed and effective;
- relationships are very good throughout the school and as a result pupils are becoming confident and self-assured young people; and
- pupils are very positive about the school and thoroughly enjoy their education.

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

- provide appropriate careers advice;
- attend to the aspects of welfare, health and safety noted in section three of this report;
- improve the aspects of the premises and accommodation recorded in section five; and
- attend to the omitted items of information in section six.

**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:

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

# **COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION**

## **1. The quality of education provided by the school**

### **The quality of the curriculum**

The curriculum makes good provision for pupils' academic, physical and personal development. It is broad and balanced and provides a secure framework which enables pupils to make progress.

The curriculum in the nursery follows the national guidance for pupils in the Foundation Stage. The curriculum is well planned and contains a good balance between adult-directed and child-chosen activities and between care and education. Pupils' curiosity is fostered successfully so that they become confident and independent learners. Good use is made of the outdoors to enrich all aspects of the curriculum. The skills of investigation, exploration and experimentation are given a high priority in the daily timetable.

In Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 all subjects of the National Curriculum are taught, together with religious education and personal, social and health education (PSHE). The curriculum is given further breadth with the inclusion of French. A strong emphasis is placed on speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy. The school uses a proprietary programme for teaching reading and spelling. Punctuation, grammar and comprehension skills are practised regularly and pupils benefit from the clear focused attention. However, there are more limited opportunities for pupils to write for a wide range of purposes and a variety of audiences. Much of the evidence in pupils' books and files consists of relatively short pieces of writing or the completion of work sheets with comparatively little evidence of sustained in-depth quality stories and descriptions.

The personal, social and health education programme provides a good range of topics which help pupils develop their self-esteem and form constructive relationships. Currently there is no careers guidance programme in place. The school does not plan opportunities to enable pupils to achieve economic awareness.

The school affords good sporting and musical opportunities. All pupils learn to play the violin or clarinet. Music makes a strong contribution to the curriculum and is an important aspect of school life. Individual pupils may request additional instrumental lessons. Pupils are coached in football, netball, hockey and cricket. During the summer months pupils have weekly swimming lessons in the school's pool. Pupils benefit from visits to places of interest to extend and enrich their experiences of work in the classroom. Pupils have visited local museums and galleries and have travelled to France. The school has a strong commitment to develop pupils' environmental awareness using the rich resource of its spacious surroundings. Pupils have many first-hand opportunities to study plant and animal life and learn about conservation.

There are clear and detailed policies for all subjects. These are of good quality. They include reference to teaching and learning styles and the implications for pupils with special educational needs (SEN). A particularly strong feature of this

documentation is the identification, for each subject, of links with other areas of the curriculum. The policies are well supported by appropriate schemes of work from national guidance documents. The provision for pupils with SEN is good. The school's policy for SEN has regard to the national Code of Practice. Appropriate emphasis is placed on the early identification of pupils with SEN and the setting of specific targets for them to achieve. The school offers specialist support for those pupils who require it for English and mathematics. In addition, there are small classes for pupils whose dyslexia prevents them accessing the curriculum in the mainstream classes. These pupils have an intensive course of study to improve their language skills, which is taught by specialist teachers.

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

The teaching is good overall. The staff are experienced and many have specialist qualifications related to meeting special educational needs. Lessons are generally planned carefully with a satisfactory range of resources, but there is limited use of information and communication technology (ICT) in class lessons. Because relationships are very good and there is effective and sensitive discipline, lessons run smoothly and often at a brisk pace. Classrooms are orderly and purposeful places, often with a quiet hum of focused learning.

Teaching in the 'Little Berries' nursery is outstanding. Its strength lies in the staff's good understanding of the needs of young children and teachers' skill in providing a range of appropriate activities. The highest priority is given to the fostering of children's well-being. Relationships between children and staff are excellent. Children are given a good start in acquiring basic skills in literacy and numeracy and are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Throughout the school teachers generally have high expectations. Strong emphasis is placed on the acquisition of good phonic skills using a proprietary system. The teaching of speaking and listening skills and reading is good. However, the teaching of writing is only satisfactory. Teaching in mathematics is strong, developing rapid and accurate skills in computation. The teaching of ICT, drama, history and design technology is good and pupils enjoy these subjects immensely. The support and teaching of pupils with special educational needs is also good and pupils are making good progress as a consequence. This is particularly the case with practical subjects.

Teachers have a suitable range of teaching techniques which they use to good effect. They have clear objectives for their lessons, which they share with their pupils and check that they understand. The objectives mainly show what the pupils are to learn but occasionally they are less helpful, setting out merely what they are to do. Explanations are clear and prepare the pupils effectively for the activities. The teachers set out their expectations of work and behaviour so that the pupils know precisely what they have to do. Tasks are interesting, varied and closely matched to the lesson objectives. Teachers check pupils' progress carefully through the lesson, providing support and challenge where necessary. Pupils respond very well, concentrating throughout and usually doing their best. The ends of lessons are usually used carefully to check understanding, consolidate knowledge and prepare pupils for what they are to do next.

However, the teaching occasionally falls short of the school's good standards when the teacher's behaviour management is not consistent with the school's expectations, questioning techniques are ineffective or the pupils are not sufficiently involved in the lesson. At times, in otherwise satisfactory lessons, pupils are all given the same work to complete, irrespective of their ability. Inevitably, this leads to the more able pupils not being sufficiently challenged in the lesson. Occasionally, the pace of lessons is too slow.

The school has appropriate assessment systems. Teachers' assessments are linked to the school's own grading system and are used to inform parents of their children's progress. However, a weakness of the system is that the grades are not linked to National Curriculum attainment targets, which makes it difficult to measure pupils' attainments against national norms. The school is aware of this deficiency and has already begun to 'level' pupils' work against national targets in English and mathematics. Very good use is made of standardised tests to assess pupils' educational needs and to diagnose their specific learning difficulties. The pupils have targets for improvement, helping them to see what they need to do next. Teacher's use of marking is inconsistent. Some is very effective in showing pupils how well they have reached the objectives of the lesson and achieved their targets and what they need to do to improve, but this is not always the case.

Assessment in the 'Little Berries' nursery is good. There is a clear policy which is translated well into practice. Assessments are frequent and regular and observation is an important element. Staff use the results of their assessments effectively to adjust the planning of children's work.

***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 fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- *provide appropriate careers advice for secondary age pupils (paragraph 1(2)(g)).*

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

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their spiritual development is supported effectively by the acceptance of all faiths and cultures together with the school's Christian ethos. The grounds develop pupils' awareness of the beauty of nature. They are taught to reflect on a range of spiritual and moral issues, and aspects of the human condition, such as care for the environment. There is a very strong emphasis on appropriate social behaviour and pupils report there is almost no bullying. Good behaviour is reinforced in (PSHE) lessons and through the 'Golden Rules' posted in every classroom. The personal, social and citizenship education programme introduces pupils to British public institutions, such as Parliament, while a range of visitors from public services have visited the school.

Pupils are given several responsibilities around the school, which they undertake with enthusiasm. The school council is influential and, for example, has made representation about the amount of homework given at weekends. Pupils raise money for charities and good causes of their choice. The curriculum supports pupils' cultural awareness well. Pupils of all ages enjoy performing a number of musical and drama performances each year, and there is a well-constructed programme of visits to places of interest such as museums and democratic institutions. Pupils learn French from Year 1 and visiting speakers from a variety of faiths help prepare pupils for life in our multi-cultural society. Children in the nursery have celebrated Diwali and are beginning to understand some facets of Hindu culture.

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

Yes.

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

The school gives a high priority to the welfare of its pupils, who are well cared for. Pupils are adequately supervised at all times to ensure their safety. There is a comprehensive range of policies to support pupils' welfare. These include clear written policies to promote good behaviour amongst pupils and to alert teachers to issues such as pupils' safety on out-of-school visits. The school actively promotes healthy eating. School lunches are well balanced and nursery pupils enjoy a fresh fruit snack mid-morning.

Risk assessments are carried out regularly on various aspects of the school's provision and operations. However there is a need to ensure that risk assessments of the premises are more effective in the identification of potential hazards, for example, the maintenance and storage of glue guns in the design and technology workshop.

The school is fully committed to child protection and has identified a child protection officer. Almost all the staff are up-to-date with training to help them recognise the signs of possible child abuse. Training has been arranged for staff who have recently joined the school.

The school maintains an appropriate log of the fire drills, which take place every half term. Fire fighting equipment is checked annually and fire evacuation notices are clearly displayed throughout the building.

There are clear and detailed procedures for First Aid, which are known by all staff. First Aid boxes are easily accessible. A number of staff have current First Aid Certificates. The school keeps accurate records of accidents.

Pupils are well behaved, polite and courteous. The school's clear behaviour policy and the 'Golden Rules' provide an effective framework for pupils to learn to take responsibility for their actions and to distinguish right from wrong. The very good relationships between staff and pupils demonstrate further values, such as respect

for one another. There is a clear system of rewards and sanctions, with guidance to staff on how to administer these.

The admission and attendance registers are not maintained in accordance with the regulations.

The school is committed to reviewing facilities should a disabled pupil be admitted to the school. The school has not yet produced a suitable three year plan to improve access as required by the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 (DDA).

***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 risk assessments of the premises are more effective in the identification of potential hazards (paragraph 3(4));*
- maintain admission and attendance registers in accordance with the regulations (paragraph 3(9)).*

***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**

Appropriate Criminal Records Bureau checks have been carried out on all staff and trustees of the school. The school has taken effective steps to ensure that all members of staff are suitable persons to be working with children.

The school has an appropriate recruitment policy and checks are made to confirm the identity, medical fitness, previous employment history and qualifications of prospective staff. References are sought and the information gained is taken into account before confirming appointments.

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

Yes.

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

The school is situated in a large Victorian house set in spacious, attractive grounds. The Little Berries nursery is accommodated in a double demountable building. The main school is undergoing renovation and development that is sympathetic to the



original architecture. Classrooms are adequate in size for the number of pupils on roll. There are specialist rooms for science, art, music and ICT. Outside there is a large gymnasium and a design technology workshop. Provision for sports and games is good, with a number of pitches and recreation areas. There is an outdoor swimming pool, which is to undergo renovation in the near future.

The buildings are in a safe condition. Most classrooms and public areas are attractively decorated, although the science lab and preparation rooms have not yet been completed. The roof of the main building has been repaired and is now substantially water and wind resistant. The school has sufficient washrooms and has plans to provide a toilet adapted for the disabled in the near future. Most areas are kept in a tidy and clean condition, although there are a few areas that have not yet been renovated, especially the pavilion and the swimming pool changing rooms. Some furniture is quite old and needs to be replaced, especially the gymnastics boxes and most of the locker-top desks.

Although the new proprietors have done much to improve the accommodation, there are a number of areas in which the school does not meet regulations. In the nursery building some of the window frames are rotten. The school has had the building surveyed and is awaiting a report on its condition. There are a number of rotten or ill-fitting window frames in the main building, which also need attention. The school's facilities for pupils who are ill do not meet requirements but the school improvement plan has already identified the need to provide an appropriate sick room. The science preparation room does not meet health and safety requirements. There are a number of trip hazards around the school, including worn carpets, uneven floors and low steps. Outside, a number of paths are uneven, especially the path to the Little Berries building. The school is heated by a variety of methods, but these are not always efficient and there are some working areas in which the temperature is below the required minimum of 18° Celsius.

***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 the areas of rotten wood and ill-fitting window frames noted in the report are repaired so as to provide better resistance to penetration by rain, snow, wind and moisture (paragraph 5(f));*
- ensure that the science preparation room meets health and safety requirements (paragraph 5(j));*
- ensure there are appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(l));*
- ensure the heating in classrooms and other parts of the school is satisfactory and in accordance with The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(p)); and*

- *ensure there is appropriate flooring in all areas of the main building and that it is in good condition (paragraph 5(s)).*

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

The school provides an appropriate range of information to parents and other professional bodies. It is striving continually for ways to improve this. Emphasis is placed on developing strong links with parents. The weekly 'Mother and Toddler Group' is an example of such a link. Parents and others meet in the attractive nursery where they are welcomed into the school community. Toddlers have opportunities to use the wide range of resources.

In the nursery, the daily contact between staff and parents provides a useful forum for the exchange of information. Consultation evenings are held to provide opportunities for parents to meet teachers to review their children's progress and achievements. Written reports are sent out twice a year and mid-term grades are issued. However, approximately half the parents who responded to the questionnaire sent out prior to the inspection, feel that they are not kept well informed about their child's progress.

Regular contact is maintained through newsletters which are well presented, informative and give parents a clear overview of the planned curriculum activities and details of events and procedures.

Detailed information for parents and prospective parents is in the form of a prospectus. There are two omissions in this document. When parents accept a place in the nursery they receive a helpful welcome booklet. The school gives parents more information about its organisation and provision in its 'Terms and Conditions' document and in the 'Joining Pack' which they receive before their children join the school. Parents are almost unanimous in their judgement that the school helped their children to settle in well when they joined.

### ***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 particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of public examinations (paragraph 6(2)(i)); and*
- *make sure parents and prospective parents receive details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding year (paragraph 6(2)(j)).*

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

The school has a complaints procedure which sets out its philosophy of being fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. The policy outlines how a complaint can be made and the steps that will be taken to address it.

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

Yes.

## SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Moon Hall College and Burys Court Preparatory School
DfES Number:	936/6251
Type of school:	Nursery, primary and secondary day school
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	2 - 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 42      Girls: 16      Total: 58
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys: 7      Girls: 6      Total: 13
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys: 2      Girls: 1      Total: 3
Annual fees:	£960 - £14,580
Address of school:	Flanchford Road Leigh Reigate RH2 8RE
Telephone number:	01306 611372
Fax number:	01306 611037
Email address:	enquiries@buryscourtschool.co.uk
Principal	Mrs Berry Baker
Headteacher:	Mr David Rowlands
Proprietor:	Moon Hall Schools Educational Trust
Reporting Inspector:	Mr Stephen Dennett
Date of inspection:	30 October – 2 November 2006

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