



Beech Grove School

Independent School

Inspection report

**Better
education
and care**

DfES Registration Number 886/6073
Unique Reference Number 131181
Inspection number 296775
Inspection dates 16-17 January 2007
Reporting inspector Ian Hartland HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

Age group 4-16	Published 09 February 2007	Reference no. 296775
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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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

Beech Grove School is located in 70 acres of land in the middle of the Kent countryside between Canterbury and Dover. It is co-educational and provides for children from 4-16 years of age. There are 57 children on roll. The school was established in 1996 and is an integral part of the Beech Grove residential Christian community. The families of the children in the school live on the site. The community is based in the buildings of a former teacher training college which was closed in 1986, and which was itself built around a large former mansion house on the adjoining land. The parents work in the school and at a large warehouse, also on site, which manufactures and distributes furniture. The education and care of children has a high priority for the community, which values especially the place of play, music, the outdoors and natural world and the fostering of creativity. The school caters essentially for the children of members of the community and their guests. This is the school's first published inspection.

Evaluation of the school

Parents and the pupils themselves are overwhelmingly positive about the school and are right to be so; it is a good school with some outstanding features. The school, in its idyllic rural setting, provides a good education and caters very effectively for the needs of the children. The pupils are very happy at the school. The provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils feel safe and comfortable as they know each other and the staff so well and, more particularly, as their parents are so close by and they share lunch with them daily. They make good progress. Aspects of assessment and reporting to parents are underdeveloped. The school meets almost all of the regulations.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good and supported by brief but suitable schemes of work and study programmes. The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant and demonstrates a concern to develop the whole child. Pupils learn English, mathematics, science, history, geography, physical education, art and craft, and music; elements of religious education are taught through

subjects such as history. No ancient or modern foreign language is taught. A high priority is given to aspects of English including, reading writing, spelling, grammar and handwriting. Learning through outdoor work and play and contact with the natural environment are especially important elements in the provision with plenty of opportunities each afternoon to do so.

Practical approaches to developing technological skills through real-life experiences for example in carpentry, plumbing and farm work are employed to good effect. The pupils do not use computers or other mechanized tools or machinery at all, in line with the school's educational philosophy. The community believes that a thorough training 'in the basics' which allows sufficient time for other creative activities and outdoor pursuits to be more important. The pupils say that they are happy to develop skills in information and communication technology later on. The school provides good opportunities for contact with the local community with regular visits from local schools and visits to places of interest including Canterbury cathedral, Deal Castle and old people's homes. The curriculum provides for all pupils across the range of abilities to make good progress.

The quality of teaching is good overall. The quality of teaching observed ranged from very nearly outstanding to satisfactory, with most lessons judged as good. Lesson planning was securely based on longer term planning but the learning outcomes were not always clear to the pupils. The pupils knew what it was they were expected to do, but were not always clear what they were expected to learn.

The teachers successfully establish by their gentle and encouraging manner a calm, purposeful, respectful atmosphere. The small classes allow the teachers to provide good support for individuals and permit pupils to work at their own pace. Pupils with learning difficulties are very well supported. The teachers effectively manage the learning of the two year groups in each class. The teachers' questioning is effective, with a range of different pupils invited to reply, and plenty of time is given for them to think and to respond. In the satisfactory lessons the blackboards were underused to record key information to reinforce the learning points and support the learning of less able pupils. Some lessons moved at too slow a pace and lacked sufficient stimulation to ensure the pupils remained fully engaged. Inspection evidence indicates that the pupils are making good progress, especially in English and mathematics.

Very good relationships exist between the staff and pupils and between the pupils. The pupils feel very safe and comfortable in the classroom because staff and pupils all know each other so well. Pupils concentrate very well and are consistently responsive to questions. The pupils' behaviour in lessons was excellent. The marking is regular and usually contains comments on the quality of work and the amount of effort expended but does not consistently indicate to pupils what they need to do to improve. Assessment is undeveloped. The

school does not have clear frameworks for assessment or a written policy for marking and does not meet the regulations for assessment.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding. The teachers are very successful in fostering pupils' enjoyment of school and their positive attitudes towards learning. The school gives a high priority to the development of pupils' social skills. The staff provide very good role models for the pupils in their care. All staff set high expectations of behaviour. The pupils are polite and friendly to visitors and very supportive of one another. They form a cohesive family group and the older pupils also act as very good role models for the younger ones. The excellent standards of behaviour reflect the strong Christian ethos that pervades the school, which successfully helps the pupils to develop into lively, mature young people who are able to think for themselves.

The pupils are given opportunities to voice their opinions, build up confidence and self-esteem and to participate fully in the life of both the school and the community. A distinctive feature of the outdoor environment is the Peace Garden which contains a number of distinctive displays and plaques relating to recent wars and tragedies, both within the nation and abroad. This was created on the initiative of the pupils and their views about ways to further develop it are listened to by the school leaders and acted upon. Pupils understand well their responsibilities to others and to the broader community. Older students run clubs, and all are involved in work experience and service to the community, which helps their awareness and future economic well-being. The activities connected with the Peace Garden, such as raising funds for the orphaned children of the Tsunami, bring the pupils into contact with different cultures and ways of life thus broadening their knowledge of the wider world. Recent good work has included a study of the life of Martin Luther King. Attendance is very good.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school's provision for the pupils' welfare health and safety is good. There is a series of detailed policy documents which meet requirements. A safe, healthy and strongly nurturing environment has been created for the pupils. They have excellent opportunities daily for plenty of fresh air and exercise. They eat healthy meals and are provided with fruit and water at break times. Their welfare and general well-being is given a very high priority. There is an appropriate behaviour policy with a suitable system of sanctions to deal with incidents of inappropriate behaviour. There have been no serious incidents which have led to sanctions. Pupils report that there is no bullying. The small

scale of the school ensures that the staff know the pupils well and can supervise them effectively at all times.

There is appropriate provision for First Aid with staff qualified to administer it. First Aid boxes are appropriately stocked. Accidents are carefully recorded. The child protection policy meets requirements. The school has made the necessary provision for fire safety. The fire drill book is up-to-date and equipment is regularly checked. The health and safety policy is appropriate and includes risk assessments related to the school, the site and for visits. The attendance and admission registers are kept in accordance with requirements. The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school undertakes the full range of checks to ensure the suitability of all staff to work with the children and young people.

School's premises and accommodation

The location of the school, part way up one side of a hill in a shallow valley provides good views of the local countryside and provides adults and children with a feeling of peace and space. All aspects of the site, premises, accommodation and school environment are very good and make a very positive contribution to the pupils' progress, enjoyment and well-being. The school building is in a location well away from any roads and traffic. It is an attractive modern building with bright, well-lit, well-insulated, good-sized classrooms. The wide central corridor through the school with classrooms either side ensures the pupils do not feel cramped. The school has a very good range of facilities including its own indoor swimming pool, grassed and all-weather sports pitches and sufficient land to permit healthy walks on site. The excellent library facilities provide very good support for all subjects. There are no specialist rooms for science subjects.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Much useful information, which includes an expression of the school's aims and ethos, is contained in the prospectus and accompanying set of notes and policies. A list of all staff and further policies are available on request. Although the parents report that they are generally happy with the quality of the information they receive and with the progress that their children make, the termly reports they receive are not of a consistently high quality. There is no clear indication of the meaning of the grades awarded for each subject. Some reports contain too little comment from subject and class teachers to give the parents a clear view about how well their children are doing and what needs to be improved. All necessary information and documentation was provided for the inspectors.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a detailed written complaints policy which sets out the procedures it will follow in the management of any complaint. It contains information on all of the specific elements required by the regulations. There have been no complaints from parents.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the teaching and assessment (standard 1) and must:

- develop a framework to assess pupils' work and ensure information from such assessment is used to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress (paragraph 1(3)(g))
- devise a framework by which pupil performance can be evaluated by reference to either the school's own aims, as provided to parents and/or, by national norms (paragraph 1(4)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- provide an annual written report for parents on the progress and attainment of each registered child in the main subject areas taught (paragraph 6(5)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- devise a teaching and learning policy to assist in further developing the quality of teaching
- ensure all teachers are familiar with current understandings of good practice in teaching and learning.

School details

Name of school	Beech Grove School
DfES number	886/6073
Unique reference number	131181
Type of school	Christian
Status	Independent
Date school opened	1996
Age range of pupils	4-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 30 Girls: 27 Total: 57
Annual fees (day pupils)	N/A
Address of school	Beech Grove School Sandwich Road Nonington Kent CT15 4HH
Telephone number	01304 842980
Fax number	01304 843734
Email address	bgrschoolsec@mailstack.com
Headteacher	Mr Kevin Mow
Proprietor	Bruderhof Communities of the UK Ltd
Reporting inspector	Ian Hartland HMI
Dates of inspection	16- 17 January 2007