

# Bladon House School

Independent Special School

Inspection report

---

DfES Registration Number	830/6009
Unique Reference Number	113019
Inspection number	296780
Inspection dates	22-23 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Frank Price AI

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).

---

---

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

## 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

Bladon House is a residential and day special school, providing education for pupils from 5-19 years of age who have autism, severe or moderate learning difficulties, who also have speech and language difficulties. The school is based on two separate sites. The main site at Newton Solney near Burton-on-Trent, provides education and accommodation for 41 Pupils. The site based at Mickleover provides education for 36 post-16 students. The school has on-site residential units and two off-site houses. It is registered to admit 130 pupils, but currently there are 77 on roll. Pupils generally have more complex learning needs now, than at the time of the last inspection in November 2001. The last inspection of the boarding provision took place in October 2006. The school is part of the SENAD group, which owns several other establishments providing education and care for pupils and adults with learning difficulties.

The school's aim is *'to realise the full potential of children and young people with special educational needs through the provision of high quality education in a caring and supportive environment.'*

## Evaluation of the school

Bladon House School is a good school, which successfully achieves its aims. It provides good quality care and education and this, together with the good curriculum and effective teaching, enables pupils to make good progress. Some of the residential accommodation is of a good standard, but some is in need of improvement and modernisation. Teachers use alternative forms of communication very effectively to help pupils understand and communicate. However, information and communication technology (ICT) is not used widely enough in lessons and pupils' wider cultural development is under developed. The school meets all but one of the regulations.

## Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. Planning of the curriculum at all levels is detailed and good. Clear subject policies are supported by comprehensive schemes of work and short term planning for lessons is equally thorough. The school has worked hard to ensure that the curriculum is broad, balanced and adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. The personal, social, health and citizenship curriculum covers

relevant topics, including sex and relationship education and pupils receive weekly lessons, as well as addressing issues, such as managing change or conflict when need arises. The residential provision is valuable in promoting pupils' independence and personal development effectively. There are good arrangements in place to ensure that consistent approaches are maintained for pupils across both care and education aspects of the school. Pupils participate in a good range of sport and leisure activities and this helps them to develop healthier lifestyles.

The school makes good use of a range of methods to meet pupils' needs, such as sensory approaches and specialised strategies such as the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECs). A strength of the curriculum is the ability to meet the specific needs of individual pupils, when they are unable to access subjects due to barriers to learning, such as behaviour. This enables them to gradually participate in lessons and start to experience success.

The inter-disciplinary teamwork is a strength of the school. Therapists, care and education staff work closely together to create very good individual education plans for pupils. These ensure that all aspects of a child's needs are carefully considered and met. They are reviewed regularly to check pupils are making good progress against their objectives, which cover literacy, numeracy and personal development skills.

There is a very good range of externally accredited academic and vocational courses offered to pupils from Key Stage 4 onwards. The breadth of accreditation allows pupils, whatever their level of ability, to experience success and gain a sense of pride, for example in the National Skills Profile, ASDAN, and Duke of Edinburgh Awards. Post 16 students have a wide range of experiences to prepare them for their next stage of life. These include a wide variety of work experience placements, usually in the community, such as working in a canteen or on a conservation project on Cannock Chase. Pupils at Key Stage 4, have on-site work experience at the school. There are valuable links with local colleges so that the students can develop their independence and personal skills in a mature environment. Careers education and guidance is good and the school has good links with Connexions, so that students are well prepared for the future. Some post 16 students live in smaller residential houses in the community and this provides a good bridge towards future independent or sheltered living. The school makes good use of local facilities to support pupils' learning in real situations and visits to local shops, swimming pool and places of interest provide valuable opportunities.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching is strongest where teachers have good subject knowledge such as in ICT and physical education. Pupils enjoy practical science investigations and preparing simple meals in food technology. Planning for lessons is good with each pupil having clear individual learning objectives. Teachers know their pupils well. One parent commented that 'huge amounts of effort are made to find out what makes him tick'. Alternative forms of communication, such as signs, symbols, photographs and synthesised voice devices

are used very well to help pupils communicate more easily. Whilst pupils use ICT well in the dedicated ICT rooms, it is not used widely enough in classes to support other aspects of learning or to make teaching more stimulating. Sometimes activities lack challenge with an over emphasis on cutting, sticking and colouring activities and when this happens pupils have short attention spans.

Pupils' progress is carefully assessed and monitored. Recently introduced assessment procedures have been helpful in measuring pupils' small steps of progress more accurately and are helpful to teachers in setting accurate and challenging targets for pupils. The school uses this information very well to demonstrate the good progress made by pupils.

There is a good range of resources, although there are not enough interactive whiteboards in classrooms. The school has plans to address this issue. Teaching assistants are skilled and generally well deployed to support pupils' individual needs.

### Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Staff work hard to develop strong, supportive relationships with each pupil. The good rapport they have with staff and each other build confidence and self-esteem. Pupils have well formed views and they express these with confidence. For example, that they enjoy the school day and their evenings in residence very much. The school's values and strong ethos is communicated effectively throughout its work. Pupils' well-being is given much consideration and they are treated with considerable respect. Pupils' positive outlook, helpful interactions with each other and good behaviour shows well how they have adopted these values. They contribute generously to the life of the school, for example, helping make the rules, but also in several ways locally by assisting voluntary organisations and fund-raising for charities.

This good personal development, along with the many skills learnt to manage when they are adults, is a good preparation for the future. Enterprise projects, such as running a small food business and the citizenship curriculum contribute well in this respect. The curriculum in general promotes pupils' cultural development and it gives appropriate attention to the diverse cultures in Britain, although the school's links with minority cultures are limited.

### Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school's provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. It has a broad range of well implemented health and safety features, which results in staff throughout the school being sharply focused on keeping pupils' safe. This good attention to safety permeates successfully to pupils, who take care and act in ways

that ensure that they and others stay safe. Staff are trained appropriately for managing challenging behaviour and the school has good contingencies in place for supporting those pupils' most at risk. Staff are also trained in First Aid and alert to child protection matters. While the school had a thorough fire risk assessment in August 2006, some recommendations indicated as being of high priority have not been dealt with. The school is now addressing these.

The school takes effective steps to enable pupils to be healthy. Their diet is given careful thought. Meals and snacks are managed well and pupils offered healthy options. Pupils happily choose and enjoy the daily selection of fruit and salads. They get good exercise at playtimes and opportunities for playing sports throughout the year. Physical education has sufficient time in the curriculum. It is taught expertly with appropriate physical challenges that contribute to each pupil staying fit and healthy.

### Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has robust procedures for the appointment of staff. All of the required checks, including those for staff from overseas, are carried out prior to their appointment to confirm their suitability to work with children. The school maintains a thorough central record showing when each check was completed.

### School's premises and accommodation

The standard of the premises and accommodation is satisfactory overall. The school occupies a large site. Some of the residential accommodation and classrooms are housed in modular premises and whilst staff have worked hard to make them as presentable as possible, some of the residential accommodation is in need of modernisation. The school has identified this as an urgent priority for development. Where these facilities have been replaced with modern buildings the accommodation is of a good standard. The residential areas have small kitchens, for pupils to prepare light snacks to encourage independence and choice, and lounges for pupils to relax. The main school building has general classrooms and there are adjacent specialist facilities such as an information and communication technology suite, food technology room, sensory and soft playroom, gym and a small library. Some classrooms are small but adequate for the number of pupils using them. The post 16 off-site provision is of a good standard and provides a more adult environment for students to work in.

The school is set in spacious grounds and there are ample grassed and hard playing surfaces for pupils. The grounds provide good opportunities for pupils to develop a healthy lifestyle through horse riding and growing vegetables using the horticultural facilities.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides a good range of information to parents. The prospectus includes a '*statement of purpose*' and gives helpful information to new and prospective parents and carers. The school provides end of year reports and annual reviews to parents and carers on the progress of their child. Most parents' state they were kept well informed. Responses from placing authorities were positive.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a complaints policy, which has recently been updated to meet all the regulations. The school takes seriously any complaints it receives. It has received five formal complaints in the last year. These have been fully investigated and suitable actions taken. Procedures also allow pupils to make a complaint if they so wish.

## 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 provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- take immediate steps to deal with all the outstanding additional fire risks identified in the school's fire risk assessment (paragraph 3(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:

- Improve some of the residential accommodation.
- Enhance teaching and learning through better use of ICT in lessons.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures and beliefs.

## School details

Name of school	Bladon House School		
DfES number	830/6009		
Unique reference number	113019		
Type of school	Special school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1969		
Age range of pupils	5-19 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 64	Girls: 13	Total: 77
Number of boarders	Boys: 40	Girls: 12	Total: 52
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 64	Girls: 13	Total: 77
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 13	Girls: 0	Total: 13
Annual fees (day pupils)	£55,300		
Annual fees (boarders)	£104,200		
Address of school	Newton Solney. Burton-on-Trent DE15 0TA		
Telephone number	01283 563787		
Fax number	01283 510980		
Email address	Katebritt@bladonhouse.com		
Headteacher	Mrs Kate Britt		
Proprietor	SENAD		
Reporting inspector	Mr Frank Price		
Dates of inspection	22-23 March 2007		