



Botton Village School

Independent School

Inspection report

**Better
education
and care**

DfES Registration Number 8156023
Unique Reference Number 121753
Inspection number 296781
Inspection dates 5-6 February 2007
Reporting inspector Mr Martin Bradley 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 4-14	Published 5 March 2007	Reference no. 296781
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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

Botton Village School was founded in 1960 and has close links with the Botton Village Camphill Community including using some community facilities and receiving some funding from them. Since the 1970s the school has taken pupils from the wider community as well as from families in Botton. It follows the Steiner Waldorf curriculum and is managed by a College of Teachers which reports to the Eskdale Community Trust Educational Council, a charitable trust. No fees are charged by the school; instead families make contributions according to their means.

Evaluation of the school

The overall quality of education provided at Botton Village School is satisfactory, with several strengths. Almost all of the regulations are met. Developments since the last inspection have improved the quality of provision. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good as is the behaviour of the great majority. The school's setting in the Botton Village community, whilst isolated, provides an excellent environment which supports the Steiner philosophy. The school makes good use of local resources as well as of its outstanding accommodation.

Quality of education

The school follows the Steiner curriculum although this is currently adapted as most classes contain two year groups and there is no class 8 (Year 9) at present. The curriculum is satisfactory. It is broad, including the introduction of French and German from class 1 (Year 2) as well as eurythmy (a form of dance). The school places a strong emphasis on creative and aesthetic work and this is effective. For all pupils in class 1 and above much of the morning is taken up by a Main Lesson in which a subject or theme is followed for up to two hours for periods of up to four weeks. This provides pupils with good opportunities to develop their knowledge and includes English and mathematics which are also taught at other times during the school day.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall; half of the lessons seen were at least good. There are variations in the quality of planning and assessment in different lessons. The school's policy is to have a recommended approach to

planning and assessment, but to leave it to individual teachers to decide whether or not to use this. As a result whilst the overall programmes for subjects are taught, the school is less clear about the detail of what is taught to successive year groups. In the best lessons pupils are kept actively involved in their work and teachers ensure that all maintain concentration. The work achieved in such lessons is of a high standard. In eurythmy the pupils are effectively involved in developing their dance forms and their understanding of the significance of movements and actions. The work provides good challenge and involves pupils continuously. In less successful lessons, some pupils are not sufficiently involved in activities for the whole time and so their attention begins to wander. Especially in the classes for older pupils opportunities to develop independent work are relatively limited.

The school makes regular assessments of all pupils' work and behaviour, especially during the weekly College of Teachers' meeting. These opportunities to consider pupils' progress are mainly informal. They do not include sufficient detail and information based on objective assessments of the point which pupils have reached in their learning. End of year assessments are made for all pupils, but are not yet set against the previous assessments to track progress over time. The assessments are not included in the reports to parents, although they can be discussed with them.

Pupils' progress is satisfactory, although it varies between classes and subjects. Pupils work well and show an interest in their lessons. In a small minority of lessons progress is constrained when poor behaviour by individuals interrupts the class's learning and the extension of their work. There is good support for pupils with additional learning needs and/or disabilities and these pupils make satisfactory progress. In particular their self esteem and application to learning in their classes is well promoted. Basic skills for such pupils are developed through one to one support by staff. Art and eurythmy curative therapies support the development of pupils' confidence and self awareness.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The school's support for the spiritual, moral and social development of its pupils is good. Particularly in the younger classes, lessons begin and end with appropriate opportunities for reflection, a well-chosen and well-sung song and often the recitation of poetry. This forms a part of the Waldorf approach to establishing rhythms and routines across the week, the seasons and the year and is introduced in the Kindergarten. Pupils are encouraged to develop moral attitudes when caring for others. Overall, the behaviour of pupils is good. However, lessons are occasionally disrupted by the inappropriate behaviour of one or two pupils. As with their social development, the chance to have lunch with family groups in the Botton Village community widens their awareness of

others and helps to promote the sense of community. Cultural development is extended through work in Main Lessons, although the relative rural isolation of the self contained community in the valley inhibits the range of direct experiences and awareness of wider cultures. Whilst some parents noted that trips outside the Village are comparatively rare, most qualified their comment by praising the good range of activities provided by the school.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils is good. The school has a good range of policies for welfare, health and safety and these are satisfactory. Not all staff are aware of the details of all the policies. For example, not all use the correct pro-forma for risk assessments when making trips outside school. Despite this, the risk assessments which are carefully made do cover the necessary issues, albeit often at undue length. The school has not completed an assessment under the Disability Discrimination Act, although it successfully provided for a pupil who used a wheelchair.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The proprietors are the Trustees of the Eskdale Community Trust although they have no day to day role in organising and running the school. All staff who have regular involvement with pupils have been subject to the appropriate checks and the school has good procedures for confirming the background of staff prior to them taking up their appointment. As with some other policies and procedures, not all relevant staff are aware of these. Despite this, the correct checks have been made.

School's premises and accommodation

The school greatly benefits from the support given by the Village community. This has included substantial support for developing new buildings and the quality and amount of accommodation are now outstanding, especially given the present number of pupils. The school has developed the outside play areas, including a tennis/ basketball court. The good-sized hall is well used for drama, sports and eurythmy. Some of the play areas continue to be developed following building work. The Kindergarten occupies part of the residential accommodation some way from the main school, but within the main area of the Village. Following a recent extension, this accommodation is now satisfactory. Woodwork is taught in a large room above the Village woodwork shop. This is satisfactory, although to access their room pupils have to pass through a workshop. A room in the new block has been provided for pupils who are unwell, but it does not meet the regulations, lacking a sink and easy access to toilets.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school has a parents' handbook. This provides a good range of information about the school, but much of it is out of date and needs revision. Some potentially helpful sections are missing. The broad curriculum outline is provided, but not the details of the main lesson themes for each class which are indicated in the list of contents. The school is aware of the need to update the content and format of the handbook to bring it to the high quality of its more general brochure as well as making sure that it fully complies with the regulations by making parents aware they can request summary details of staff qualifications.

Procedures for handling complaints

At present the procedures for handling complaints need to be revised to ensure that they fully meet the regulations. The aspects in need of revision are itemised in the next section of the report. Most parents were happy with the procedures, but a small number did not know about these.

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 premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(l)).

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

- ensure that parents are aware they can request a summary of the qualifications of staff employed at the school (paragraph 6(2)(k)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of procedures for handling complaints (standard 7) and must:

- provide for the panel hearing a complaint to have three members who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint (paragraph 7(f))
- ensure that one person on the panel is independent of the management and running of the school (paragraph 7(g))

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- ensure the procedure allows for parents to attend the panel hearing, and, if they wish, to be accompanied (paragraph 7(h))
 - ensure that the procedure provides for written records to be kept of all complaints, indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage, or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing (paragraph 7(j))
 - ensure that the procedure provides that correspondence, statements and records of complaints are to be kept confidential (paragraph 7(k)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

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:

- develop ways of identifying and recording pupils' progress over time, including using the assessments already made in a more systematic manner
- ensure that all staff are aware of and follow agreed policies and procedures, including those for lesson planning, monitoring pupils' progress and risk assessment
- investigate ways of encouraging more independent work in all classes, and especially for the older pupils.

School details

Name of school	Botton Village School
DfES number	815/6023
Unique reference number	121753
Type of school	Steiner
Status	Independent
Date school opened	1960
Age range of pupils	4-14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 33 Girls:20 Total:53
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 4 Girls: 4 Total: 8
Annual fees (day pupils)	No fees are charged: families contribute according to their means
Address of school	Botton Village School Danby Whitby North Yorkshire YO21 2NJ
Telephone number	01287661206
Fax number	01287661207
Email address	school.botton@camphill.org.uk
Administrator	Mr Michael Drake
Proprietor	Eskdale Community Trust Education Limited
Reporting inspector	Mr Martin Bradley HMI
Dates of inspection	5-6 February 2007