



Buckholme Towers School

Independent School

Inspection report

DfES Registration Number	836/6004
Unique Reference Number	113930
Inspection number	296788
Inspection dates	18 – 19 January 2007
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton

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 3-12	Published 13 February 2007	Reference no. 296788
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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

Buckholme Towers School is an independent preparatory school for boys and girls aged three to twelve years. It was founded in 1939 on the same site, a large Victorian house, which has been adapted for use as a school. There are currently 117 pupils on roll, including 11 who attend part-time. Pupils attend from a wide geographical area, giving access to schools in Poole, Bournemouth and Dorset. The majority of pupils move on to local grammar and independent schools. The school motto is '*Education through happiness. Happiness through education*'.

Evaluation of the school

The school is successful in fulfilling the intent of its motto. It provides a good quality of education in a stimulating environment where pupils enjoy their school life. Parents are very supportive of the school and are pleased with the progress their children are making. Much of this success is due to the inspiring leadership of the headteacher who has only been at the school for a relatively short time. As a result of good teaching and a well planned curriculum, pupils make good or better progress as they move through the school. The happy family atmosphere promotes the pupils' personal development well. Pupils become mature, responsible young people. Their behaviour is exemplary and they value each other and their teachers. Pupils all gain a place at the school of their choice when they leave. The school meets all the regulations.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good and is well matched to the needs of the pupils. It is planned effectively and offers a broad range of subjects with a careful balance of time given to each. The curriculum provides opportunities for all pupils to make good or better progress as they move through the school.

In Key Stages 1 and 2 and in Year 7, all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education (RE) are taught. The curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage is used well to plan a wide range of appropriate play activities for younger pupils. The curriculum is well planned, with long-, medium- and short-term plans which are effectively implemented. There is good provision for basic

skills and pupils acquire very good speaking and listening skills. Pupils become confident, articulate and mature young people.

Specialist staff teach French, information and communication technology (ICT), music and physical education to pupils from Foundation age onwards. Personal, social and health education is taught throughout the school, together with citizenship for the older pupils.

The school's policy for special educational needs has regard to the national Code of Practice. There is a recently revised system for identifying and assessing the needs of pupils that is beginning to work well.

There is a wide range of after-school clubs, which includes music and many sports, for example, karate and sailing. An extensive programme of out-of-school visits further enhances the curriculum; the older pupils are eagerly looking forward to their second residential skiing course.

The quality of teaching is good and has many outstanding features. Most of the staff are well informed, committed and enthusiastic. They pass on this enthusiasm to their pupils. The staff know the pupils very well and use this information to plan their lessons carefully and thoroughly, identifying what the pupils will learn. This enables pupils to increase their knowledge, understanding and skills. Teachers use effective questioning to encourage pupils to think for themselves and to build upon previous learning. It also helps prepare them well for the next stage of their education. Teachers set high expectations for both work and behaviour and pupils respond by trying hard. Their behaviour is outstanding.

Pupils report that teachers help them to learn and explain things clearly. Pupils work well together in pairs and small groups. They are confident to ask questions if they do not understand and they show perseverance in their work. The majority of teachers engage pupils effectively and encourage them to work well independently. Pupils in most classes are set short-term targets for writing and mathematics. The use of these targets is proving effective. It helps pupils to begin to assess their work themselves. Class work is reinforced by homework from Year 1.

The teaching assistants give very good support to all pupils. Resources are sufficient and used well to support learning. ICT is used well to support learning.

There is conscientious and effective assessment of pupils' learning. Most teachers are good at continually checking pupils' learning in lessons with targeted questioning. The school uses a wide range of assessment procedures including the Foundation Stage profile, baseline assessment, diagnostic tests and national test levels to give an accurate picture of each pupil's progress.

This information is shared with parents at regular consultation evenings and through detailed written reports.

Currently all pupils' work is marked regularly but staff need to increase diagnostic marking to give pupils more guidance on how to improve their work and set their own targets. The older pupils are well prepared for the entrance examinations for local schools.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The school makes good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. Pupils report that they enjoy school and are happy with their work. They have a positive attitude to school and attendance is very good. One pupil said: *'I like my school as everyone plays together.'*

Pupils grow in self-confidence and take pride in themselves as they move through the school. There is a friendly welcoming atmosphere and visitors are made very welcome. Pupils are given the opportunity to take responsibility for themselves. Older pupils, who take their responsibilities very seriously, act as head boy and girl, prefects, mentors and 'buddies' to younger pupils. A recently formed school council has already discussed some issues raised by the pupils.

Relationships are very good at all levels with an atmosphere of mutual respect between pupils and staff. Pupils are highly valued as individuals and treated with kindness and consideration. They know the difference between right and wrong and they helped to formulate the simple school rules.

The school takes an active role in the local community and has formed strong links with the neighbouring church. They make many visits around the locality and are forming a clear understanding of the way society works. Assemblies are held on four days each week and provide an opportunity for spiritual reflection. This, together with RE, gives the pupils a sound spiritual foundation. Within the RE curriculum pupils are taught about world religions and have visited a local synagogue. With the help of parents, pupils are able to gain an insight into different cultural traditions and recently a parent helped younger pupils celebrate Chinese New Year. Art, drama and history add additional cultural dimensions.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils is outstanding. Staff have a very clear understanding of the need to ensure that the school is a safe place in which to work and learn. There is a comprehensive range of carefully devised and implemented policies to cover all aspects of pupils' welfare

including child protection, bullying and health and safety on visits outside the school. Pupils are free from bullying and other forms of harassment. Comprehensive risk assessments are made on all aspects of school life and the pupils are very well supervised and kept safe. Procedures for First Aid are rigorous. The school has concern for fire safety and put very good procedures in place.

The pupils are encouraged to follow active and healthy lifestyles and eat fruit at breaks. They all take regular exercise, which includes weekly swimming and games, some of which are off-site using the good local facilities. The school fulfils its duties with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school rigorously undertakes the full range of checks to ensure the suitability of staff to work with children.

School's premises and accommodation

The school is located in a large detached house, adapted for educational use many years ago. It has recently been upgraded and redecorated and provides an attractive learning environment with every corner in use. There is a fully equipped, up-to-date ICT suite and a useful hall for assemblies and after school clubs. The classrooms, although small, are suitable for the number of pupils and are attractively decorated with examples of pupils' work celebrating achievement. However, some of them have reached maximum capacity.

The playground is in constant use for both play and as part of the outdoor environment for the Foundation Stage pupils. The play space in between the nursery and reception classrooms is used as part of the outdoor curriculum space. Inclement weather makes this use more difficult. The school has plans to re-develop a range of storage garages at the edge of the playground and to adapt the adjacent play area for use by this age group.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The quality of information for parents and prospective parents is good. They are given a wide range of useful information and can access the school website. The Parents Association is very supportive and active in fundraising and organising social events. The parents were very positive in the pre-inspection questionnaire in their praise for the school. They are given two written reports on their children's progress each year and have the opportunity for consultation evenings with the staff.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a set of procedures which meets the regulations and parents report that they are aware of them.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

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:

- include more diagnostic marking of pupils' work so as to help them to set their own targets for improvement
- redevelop the area used for Foundation Stage pupils when funds become available.

School details

Name of school	Buckholme Towers School		
DfES number	836/6004		
Unique reference number	113930		
Type of school	Preparatory school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1939		
Age range of pupils	3 - 12 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 51	Girls: 55	Total: 106
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 5	Girls: 6	Total: 11
Annual fees	£4,059 - £4,860		
Address of school	Buckholme Towers School 18 Commercial Road Parkstone Poole Dorset BH14 0JW		
Telephone number	01202 742871		
Fax number	01202 740754		
Email address	office@buckholme.dorset.sch.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs S Mercer		
Proprietor	Buckholme Towers School Limited		
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton		
Dates of inspection	18 – 19 January 2007		



Buckholme Towers School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number EY296479

Inspection date 19/01/2007

Inspector Anne Mitchell

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Type of inspection Nursery Education

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ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The provider must give a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must give a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Day Care and Childminding (inspection) (England) Regulations 2005 No 2300 Regulations 5 and 6).

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Buckholme Towers School is an independent school set in a Victorian house, close to the centre of Poole in Dorset. It opened in September 1939 and is run by a board of governors, and accepts children from three years of age. It operates from dedicated rooms within the school, and the children have use of various areas of the school for outside play, and specialised activities.

There are currently 117 children on the school roll, which includes 21 in the nursery and reception classes. Of these, 17 are in receipt of nursery funding. The setting supports children who have specific requirements.

The nursery and reception classes open between the times of 8:50 to 15:15, with nursery children attending a variety of sessions. The school is open Monday to Friday during term time only.

Each class has two full-time staff, a qualified teacher who is supported by a teaching assistant. The Foundation Stage department is supported by Poole Borough Early Years.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are taught by staff who have a secure knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Written observations on children are used to complete children's developmental records, but are not always used consistently to plan for the next steps for individual children's development. Children are helped to work things out for themselves, and this is seen throughout the school. Activities are well planned and cover all areas of learning. Key activities are not always evaluated to help staff consider how to adapt them for future use. Children attend for a variety of sessions and therefore may miss out on key activities, such as cooking which is only offered on a Friday. Resources are at low level to enable freedom of choice, however children do not independently select activities, choosing instead to use what has been put out for them.

Children's personal, social and emotional development is a particularly strong area. Children come into the nursery and reception class with confidence and enthusiasm. They are eager to start the day. They speak to staff and visitors with confidence, and demonstrate a high level of curiosity asking 'What's your name?', 'Are you new?', 'Are you a teacher?' Children's personal independence

is good. They put on their own coats for outdoor play and plimsolls for physical education. Children demonstrate good levels of involvement. A four-year-old focuses intently on creating a collage picture, adding additional illustration using felt tip pens. Children develop good relationships with staff and with each other. They play well together. One child helps another with his apron for water play.

Children enjoy well read stories. They participate with enthusiasm and answer open-ended questions about the story, such as 'What do the birds do at the very beginning of the day?' Children listen well and follow instructions. Children's language is good and they express themselves effectively. Four-year-old tells an adult 'When I was a baby, my mum had to get me up when I cried to feed me in the night'. Children learn that words carry meaning through the clear labelling around the room. They recognise their names as they self register, and many competently write their names on their work. They are developing their ability to link letters and sounds. While looking at the weather chart children recognise 'W' for wind. Children have good opportunities to write and make marks.

Children count confidently up to 10 and above and are beginning to recognise numerals. At registration the children count the boys and the girls. Children then select the correct number card to stick on the daily chart. They are beginning to use simple calculation, using their fingers to add together the boys and the girls. Some children know the answer before they have counted on their fingers. Children recognise a variety of shapes. Children are asked to make a pattern using different shapes and do so with increasing competence.

Children enjoy designing and building a model robot, a diving boat with an anchor and a basket made from boxes, pipe cleaners and card. They have daily access to a computer, and once a week have specialist IT teaching. Children are developing competence in mouse control, moving the teddy's items of clothing onto his body in a simple programme, for example. Children are developing a good sense of time and place, talking with confidence about what they will do at the weekend and where they have been on their holidays.

Children explore colour and texture through modelling dough, using different implements to make patterns, such as combs. They enjoy using a variety of materials to make collage designs. A four-year-old uses white pipe cleaners to make clouds. Another decorates their picture with tassels. All children are very confident in their knowledge of colour, and displayed paintings show that they have regular opportunities to use paint in a variety of ways. Children enjoy music and singing in specialist lessons and as part of the day to day routines. Children use their imagination in the well resourced role play area. Children enjoy washing the dolls as part of a theme. They initiate their own role play stories while involved in play. 'My baby likes having her hair washed. When she is dry, I'll give her some tea'.

Children have good opportunities to enjoy physical play. A specialist PE teacher takes both nursery and reception children for two sessions a week. Children learn why it is important to warm up, and what changes happen in their bodies during exercise. They play the 'Bean game', shivering when they pretend to be a chilli bean, or wobbling like a jelly bean. Children are good at finding a space and moving around the hall safely, avoiding each other. Children enjoy climbing and balancing in the outdoor play area. Children's small muscle control develops well through activities such as cutting and plaiting ribbons. They learn about being healthy through projects that explore healthy eating and dental hygiene.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children benefit from the welcoming environment. Their art work is displayed and they show pride in their achievements. Photographs of the children, busy in a variety of activities, are also displayed, promoting children's self esteem. Children are familiar with the routines. The proximity and joint working with the reception class and the rest of the school ensures the transition to school is successful. Children self register, finding their names and placing them on the 'We are here' tree. Children in both nursery and reception have representatives on the school council. Consequently children's sense of belonging is well fostered. Children learn about the wider world through well planned activities that explore cultural festivals, such as Chinese New Year. Books and resources positively reflect cultural diversity.

Children's behaviour is very good. They are polite and well mannered. Staff gently challenge rare inappropriate behaviour providing clear explanations. For example, at registration, one boy counts the children touching each one on the head in turn. One child says 'Ow, he hurt me!' Staff explain why it is important to be gentle with one another. Children have a clear understanding of the boundaries. They take part in a merit system, and work hard to help and behave well to gain points for their house. Staff provide positive role models for children's behaviour. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is good. Parent questionnaires demonstrate that they are happy with the level of education provided. The parents of children in the Foundation Stage meet with teachers at the start of the school year to discuss any issues or concerns they may have. A parents' evening, held twice a year, provides opportunities for them to be kept informed of their child's progress.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The setting meets the needs of the children for whom it provides education. Children are cared for by appropriate adults as there are rigorous systems in place to check staff. Children are effectively supported in their early education as staff ratios are high. Space is used to maximise children's learning opportunities, however, timetabling means that some children miss out on key activities.

Leadership and management is good. The head teacher of the school has a clear vision for nursery education, recognising the limitations of the premises. She attends Foundation Stage training locally and has instigated many changes to improve children's opportunities for learning. There are good systems in place to monitor the nursery education. The school have good links with Poole Early Years, who provide regular monitoring visits and reports. Staff meetings are held regularly and the head teacher liaises with the nursery and reception staff weekly to discuss the provision.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the setting agreed to integrate the planning and assessment systems to show how all children make progress and their individual developmental needs are met. They also agreed to review the organisation and provision of activities to maximise opportunities for all children to express and initiate their own ideas in creative development.

Planning and assessments have been developed. The nursery and reception classes complete observations on children which inform developmental tick sheets. These in turn provide information for future plans. However, they do not sufficiently provide plans for individual children's next steps.

Children are able to access resources to promote their creative development, but do not always do so independently.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that observations are used consistently to plan for the next steps of individual children's development, and ensure that activities are effectively evaluated.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education* (HMI ref no 2599) which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk