

# Buckswood School

## Independent School

### Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	845/6031
Unique Reference Number	114656
Inspection number	322007
Inspection dates	7–8 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Anne Duffy 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).

---



## 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 Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the school

Buckswood School is a co-educational school for day and boarding students aged 10–19. It opened in 1999 and moved to its current site in the grounds of Broomham Hall, between Hastings and Rye, in 2001. It has doubled in size since its last inspection in 2003, now catering for 325 local and international students to whom it aims to '*Teach English values in an international way*'. Students follow a curriculum delivered in English up to GCSE and A level and a wide range of extra-curricular activities are offered.

## Evaluation of the school

Buckswood School provides a good quality of education. Curricular provision is good and meets the needs of all its students who are well motivated and make good progress. Teaching and assessment are good. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding as is their behaviour. The caring ethos of the school is reflected in the family atmosphere and excellent relationships between and amongst staff and students. It is supported by appropriate procedures for the welfare, health and general safety of its students although these are not all consistently implemented. The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

## Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good with some outstanding features. It is broad and balanced and responsive to the needs of a nationally diverse student body. The international culture permeates the school curriculum and there is very good provision and support for students whose first language is not English.

Junior school students, at Key Stage 3, are provided with a good foundation for studying GCSE courses which meets the requirements of the regulations. Senior school students, at Key Stage 4, likewise, are well prepared for AS courses, for example by taking Additional Science in the fifth form. Sixth formers have access to a wide choice of subjects to suit a range of abilities, including a pre–A level diploma which helps with their preparation for A level courses. The International English Language Testing System course ensures that those international students seeking admission to a UK university are at an advantage with their accreditation in English. There is excellent provision for sport. A wide range of sporting expertise is managed very well indeed so that students gain access to teachers with very high

expectations. There are currently not enough opportunities for students to study a technological subject but the school has clear plans to address this.

There are outstanding extra-curricular opportunities which include riding, playing the bagpipes and international business trips as well as vocational activities. Students can also take advantage of studying in New Zealand at Buckswood's sister school for six weeks.

The quality of teaching is good. Some lessons are outstanding and a few are satisfactory. Teachers and students share a clear enjoyment of learning. Teachers organise lesson activities well and their excellent subject knowledge and enthusiasm for teaching has a positive impact on students' progress which is good. In the best lessons students are actively involved in their learning, respond very well to teachers' skilful use of questioning and are willing participants in effective discussions. Expectations are high and although some of the highest attaining students have insufficient challenge in lessons they are well supported outside the classroom by the range of experiences offered by the scholars' programme. Teachers know students' individual needs and provide effective support outside lessons where good use is made of access time. Teaching and support for those students who speak English as an additional language is of high quality. Effective tracking of students' progress provides teachers with good information about how well students are performing. Where learning targets are in place, as part of the school's assessment for learning initiative, these provide valuable information. However, there is some inconsistency in how these targets are shared with students and they are therefore not always clear about how to improve their work.

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

The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The outstanding extra-curricular provision, combined with good teaching, in an inclusive family atmosphere, encourages students to attend well and enjoy their time at Buckswood. As well as providing students with a solid grounding in public services and institutions in England, a strong ethos of internationalism underpins the work of the school. Students benefit from involvement in charity work in Africa and multicultural celebrations such as Burns Night, St Patrick's Day and Chinese New Year. Art work throughout the school reveals strong, culturally diverse influences.

The decision to make business studies a core subject at GCSE, coupled with work experience for all students, ensures very good access to work related activity. Vocational activities such as the 'Buckswood Stocks and Shares Portfolio' and 'Buckswood Enterprise Limited' play a strong role in providing students with experiences in the wider commercial environment.

There is a strong sense of community involvement. Many students participate in the running of drama and music productions, quad bike maintenance and management

of the school stables. An annual activities and sports day, run with student assistance, promotes good links with three local primary schools.

Behaviour is outstanding because students show respect for one another, their teachers and all other adults and demonstrate self-discipline. The 'Argonaut' system provides a good opportunity for more senior students to take responsibility for the welfare of younger ones and students support one another both personally and academically. Consequently this makes a positive contribution to the good progress they make. Students are charming, polite and excellent ambassadors for Buckswood.

## Welfare, health and safety of the students

Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place to safeguard students' safety and welfare and staff undergo regular training to keep up to date with child protection matters. Fire procedures and risk assessments for educational visits are well employed and pupils feel safe in and around school. However, although risk assessments are routine, risk is not always fully minimised in practice, particularly when new projects are undertaken. Strong staff presence in and around the school largely alleviates these kind of risks but they could be reduced further by planned management to address identified risks. First aid policies and procedures are adequate and meet the regulations, but students with 'at risk' medical conditions are not always identified quickly, particularly if on short term placements from abroad.

Sporting activities are a strength of the school and together with imaginative catering provide excellent opportunities for students to learn about and practise healthy life styles. The director and his staff are committed to promoting and encouraging communication and there are many examples of where students' requests have been responded to. Despite this, student questionnaires showed a significant minority who feel that their views are not listened to or acted upon; inspectors found no evidence that this is the case.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school keeps the required central register and checks all staff to ensure their suitability to work with children.

## School's premises and accommodation

The school has been imaginative in the way in which it has extended and developed its site and premises so that it provides an attractive learning environment. Boarding houses are benefiting from a programme of refurbishment and good use is made of all areas for teaching and after-school activities. The school fulfils its responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act, however, the school disability access plan has yet to be effectively implemented, despite the erection of a number of new buildings in recent years.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides extensive information for parents, both on entry and as their children progress through each school year. Staff are readily available to deal with queries and key staff, including the headteacher and the director, maintain close contact with families. Parents receive regular written reports about their children's progress and consultation meetings take place both formally and informally. Of those who responded to the parental questionnaire, a very large majority of parents expressed satisfaction with all aspects of their children's school life.

## Procedures for handling complaints

There is a clear set of procedures for students to use if they wish to raise a complaint and this is shared with parents in the parent handbook. Parents are aware of the steps that can be taken if matters need to be pursued further. The complaints procedures meet the requirements of the regulations but do not make it sufficiently clear that these procedures are applicable to parental complaints as well as those of students.

## 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:

- ensure that assessment of students' learning is fully embedded across all subjects
- ensure that the health needs of short stay students are more swiftly identified and recorded on entry
- ensure that the three-year accessibility plan has impact and that all risks are comprehensively assessed and minimised, especially for new ventures.

## School details

Name of school	Buckswood School		
DCSF number	845/6031		
Unique reference number	114656		
Type of school	Secondary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	11 September 1999		
Age range of pupils	11-19		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 203	Girls: 122	Total: 325
Number of boarders	Boys: 151	Girls: 55	Total: 206
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£8820		
Annual fees (boarders)	£18870		
Address of school	Broomham Hall Rye Road Guestling Hastings East Sussex TN35 4LT		
Telephone number	01424813813		
Fax number	01825812100		
Email address	tfish@buckswood.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr T Fish		
Proprietor	Mr G Sutton		
Reporting inspector	Anne Duffy HMI		
Dates of inspection	7–8 May 2008		