

Blossom House School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	3156067
Unique Reference Number	102694
URN for registered childcare and social care	EY306185
Inspection number	329740
Inspection dates	8 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Andrew Redpath 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). The inspection of childcare was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.

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

The inspection of registered provision was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focussed principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Blossom House School is a specialist day school which provides education for pupils aged 3 to 16 with speech, language and communication difficulties. It opened in 1993 and occupies an extended former residential care home located in the London borough of Merton. Currently there are 122 pupils on roll and additionally five children attend the nursery part-time for morning sessions only. Almost all pupils have a statement of special educational needs and the large majority are boys. Pupils attend from London boroughs and almost all have their places funded by their local authority. Children in the Nursery have their places funded under the nursery grant scheme and one child has a statement of special educational needs. The school's last full inspection was in November 2003 and the childcare was last inspected in June 2007. Since the last inspection, the school has extended its provision to include classes for Key Stage 4 pupils. At the time of the inspection, building works were being completed to provide additional classrooms and facilities for teaching practical subjects.

The school aims to *'provide a communication centred environment where children with a range of speech, language and communication difficulties are supported in all areas of their learning'*.

Evaluation of the school

Blossom House School provides a good quality of education. An extremely caring ethos pervades the school which ensures pupils feel safe and valued. Teaching is good and enables pupils to make good progress. The outstanding Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision ensures children make an excellent start to their education. The communication therapy sessions throughout the school are particularly effective in helping pupils improve their communication and social skills.

Clear leadership has enabled the school to extend its range of provision since the last inspection. The school is still developing planning for the secondary curriculum which is linked to completion of the building works. The large majority of parents are very happy with the school. It meets all except one regulation which relates to the provision of information.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. A broad and balanced range of activities is provided which is based on the National Curriculum. It includes an appropriate focus on meeting the needs of pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties. A personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship curriculum is in place which includes a self-awareness element to help pupils identify their strengths and difficulties. Schemes of work are in place for all subjects and a two year programme ensures pupils in mixed-age classes cover different topics as they move through the school. At Key Stage 4, all pupils are following either GCSE or Entry level courses in at least five subjects. Subjects currently on offer include English, mathematics, science, art, physical education, information and communication technology (ICT), music and food technology. There is a lack of detail in some planning but the range of subjects for older pupils to choose from is satisfactory. The school is developing a new Key Stage 4 provision. On-site facilities include therapy rooms, a sports hall, sensory room, ICT suite, and specialist rooms for teaching art, music, science and food technology. Provision for teaching practical subjects is due to increase once the current building works are completed.

The provision of speech and language therapy, physiotherapy, occupational therapy as well as music and art therapies, ensures the requirements of pupils' statements of special educational need are met fully. Pupils receive appropriate careers guidance from the Connexions service and those in Year 10 complete a varied work experience programme. All pupils study the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) course which focuses on the development of independence, social skills and preparation for leaving school.

The quality of teaching and assessment ranges from satisfactory to excellent and is good overall. Staff establish positive relationships with pupils and use praise and encouragement to help them tackle difficulties and complete their work. Lessons are structured well, with the use of visual prompts and short breaks to help pupils maintain concentration. Teaching in the EYFS is outstanding. Detailed assessment linked to a stimulating range of activities ensures children learn and develop extremely well. Excellent teaching in the communication therapy sessions assists pupils in tackling successfully their individual speech, language and communication difficulties. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge. Some secondary staff have recently taken on new areas of responsibility and are extending their knowledge. Resources to support teaching and learning are satisfactory and are being further developed in line with the current building programme. The school does not have in place a robust system for monitoring teaching and learning and

sharing its best practice. As a result, there is some inconsistency between classes. For example, in a few lessons, assessment information is not used to match work closely to the individual needs of all pupils. This leads to work either being too difficult for some pupils or lacking in challenge for others, which limits progress. In the communication therapy groups, pupils are involved very successfully in assessing and reviewing their learning.

The school has a system for regularly assessing and recording pupils' progress against levels of the National Curriculum. Given their starting points, pupils make good progress in literacy, numeracy and in developing their social and communication skills. The current Year 11 pupils are the first cohort to take public examinations and they are predicted to gain at least five GCSE or Entry level examination passes.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils enjoy being at school, attendance is good and they are proud of their school. In the words of one, 'I find the school a really nice place and teachers are friendly.' The high level of care and concern shown by staff contributes effectively to pupils' personal development. Residential visits, for example, to an outdoor pursuits centre, and participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, help to develop pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence. Effort and achievement is recognised through the awarding of tokens and cups, for example, for showing kindness or helping others.

The behaviour of pupils is good. There is a strong emphasis throughout the school on communicating clearly and listening carefully to instructions which helps pupils to understand appropriate behaviour. Consistent behaviour management ensures that pupils are treated fairly and they frequently respond by offering praise and encouragement to each other. Pupils' independence and future economic well-being are promoted effectively through work experience placements, independent travel programmes and the life skills curriculum. On a few occasions, the development of pupils' independence is restricted by staff doing too much for pupils, rather than enabling them to take the initiative. For example, by giving out equipment too readily in lessons, or by awarding tokens for good behaviour without encouraging pupils to suggest what they might deserve.

Pupils learn to contribute towards others when older pupils help younger peers with their reading, or when they help elderly people in the community. Pupils develop their understanding of public institutions and services through the ASDAN curriculum and visits to places of interest. Their knowledge of the different faiths and cultural traditions in modern Britain is satisfactory. Whilst their knowledge is developed through work in geography, religious education and by visiting places of worship, this is not yet set out in a comprehensive programme across the school.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Provision for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. Very high levels of staffing ensure pupils' welfare needs are met fully. Pupils report there is no bullying and that the small class groups afford teachers time to discuss any individual problems or concerns. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust. The school has a suitable policy and staff have received recent training. Thorough checks are completed prior to the appointment of new staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. Detailed health and safety policies and risk assessments are in place, which cover all aspects of the school's work. The school has an appropriate number of staff who are qualified in first aid. Fire drills are held regularly and fire-fighting equipment is checked by a specialist company. Pupils learn about keeping safe and leading a healthy lifestyle through the PSHE, citizenship, life skills and food technology curricula. Pupils' physical development is promoted through physical education lessons and physiotherapy and occupational therapy sessions. Regular short breaks for exercise during lessons also help pupils to relax and concentrate. The school has a plan for increasing access for disabled users which meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The EYFS provides children with excellent opportunities for learning and development. An exciting range of activities such as playing with shaving foam, using a tape recorder or listening to chime bells enables children to make the most of both the indoor and outside learning environment. The atmosphere is calm and caring so children feel safe and secure and the provision for welfare, health and safety is outstanding. They enjoy their learning and behave very well. Children show a good awareness of safety, love jumping on the trampoline and driving the cars sensibly. They eat healthy snacks and know they should drink lots of water. Adults work hard to help the children settle in and they quickly gain confidence and become part of the family atmosphere.

Children make excellent progress and achieve well across all the areas of learning, particularly in the areas of personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy. Planning is detailed and clearly linked to their learning programmes. Detailed assessment enables teachers to give children individual learning targets which provide the right level of challenge. The head of early years demonstrates a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the early years' provision. She leads extremely well and has built up a strong team with clear plans to bring about improvements, such as further developing the outside area. Safeguarding procedures are fully in place, with all children having key workers who know them and their families really well. The areas for improvement identified in the last early years' inspection report have all been remedied.

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 the one listed below.

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

- provide to the local authority and on request to the Secretary of State, where a pupil who is registered at the school is wholly or partly funded by the local authority, an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil (paragraph 6(7)).

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 the monitoring of teaching and assessment to ensure that best practice is shared across the school.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	✓			
How well do children achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage relative to their starting points and capabilities?	✓			
How good are the personal development and well-being of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	✓			
What is the quality of welfare, health and safety of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	✓			
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	✓			
What is the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage including, where relevant, the quality of childcare?	✓			

School details

Name of school	Blossom House School		
DCSF number	3156067		
Unique reference number	102694		
EY URN (for registered childcare only)	EY306185		
Type of school	Special day		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1993		
Age range of pupils	3-16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 97	Girls: 25	Total: 122
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 4	Girls: 1	Total: 5
Number of pupils aged 0-3 in registered childcare provision	Boys:1	Girls:0	Total:1
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 92	Girls: 23	Total: 115
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£24,798 - £27,555		
Annual fees (childcare)	£90 per morning session		
Address of school	8 The Drive Wimbledon London SW20 8TG		
Telephone number	020 89467348		
Fax number	020 8946 7348		
Email address	admin@blossomhouseschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Joanna Burgess		
Proprietor	Blossom House School Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Andrew Redpath HMI		
Dates of inspection	8 October 2008		