

Branwood Preparatory School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	3556004
Unique Reference Number	105991
Inspection number	330042
Inspection dates	8 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Peter Toft 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).

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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.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focused 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

The school was founded in 1928. It is a co-educational independent school for boys and girls between the ages of three and eleven years. It currently has 159 pupils on roll, all of whom attend full time. The very few pupils with special educational needs receive additional support. Forty one children are funded under the nursery grant scheme. The school's purpose-built premises stand in two acres of grounds in Eccles, Salford. The headmaster is responsible to a board of governors and trustees. The Branwood School Trust Ltd has Registered Charitable status.

The school aims to provide a secure, happy and caring environment in which high academic standards are attained in preparing pupils to sit the entrance examinations of independent and maintained grammar schools in the Greater Manchester area. It was last inspected in November 2004.

Evaluation of the school

This is an outstandingly effective school. Academic standards are high and the success rate for entry to grammar schools is excellent. Pupils' progress throughout the school is first rate. The provision for the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is outstanding overall. Pupils develop outstanding behaviour and attitudes towards learning. Their personal development is very good overall, and it is outstanding in the EYFS. The school is very well managed and runs smoothly. It provides ample opportunity for learning through its broad curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Quality of education

The school sets out to provide a rigorous curriculum to prepare pupils for successful entry to grammar schools. This it does outstandingly well and its success rate is impressive. The coverage of English and mathematics throughout the school is outstanding, both in its planning for continuity and in its execution for pupils' progression. Highly competent use is made of a wide range of teaching materials to secure this. The coverage of basic skills within these two subjects gives pupils a rock

solid foundation from which to benefit from the study of other subjects of the curriculum, both here and in their future schools. The first rate provision for English throughout the school also gives pupils the confidence and competence to express themselves clearly both in writing and orally. Within the time remaining in the curriculum, a broad range of subjects is covered, including most subjects of the National Curriculum except for design and technology. These are covered rigorously and pupils gain a great deal from their studies. Provision for personal, social and health education, though good overall, is not as well planned or resourced for continuity of learning throughout the school as are the academic subjects. A good range of extra-curricular activities is provided and those seen, for example judo and instrumental music, are taught to a high standard and secure very good progress among the pupils participating. The participation rate is high. The planning of the curriculum has improved considerably since the last inspection and is very thorough. Schemes of work for English and mathematics are excellent. They are good for the other subjects, and are adequate for personal, social and health education. Teachers' lesson planning is highly effective in promoting the excellent progress which pupils make.

The quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils are good in the EYFS and outstanding throughout the rest of the school. Teachers have very high expectations, excellent subject knowledge and both the skill and the patience to pass this on very rigorously to pupils. All pupils in lessons are expected to concentrate and they do so. This is seen, for example, when teachers ask questions of individual pupils and give them ample time to formulate their answers in depth. This aids both the development of their thinking and capacity to explain their thoughts. The teaching and classroom assistant staff are well qualified to teach the curriculum provided. They work well and efficiently together. Staff are up to date on subject content and teaching methods and they use a good variety of interesting and probing activities to stimulate pupils to think and to convey a deep sense of enthusiasm for learning. Pupils are very well engaged by the teaching and are highly motivated in lessons. They apply themselves very well throughout lessons.

Procedures for the marking of work, testing of attainment and checking of progress are excellent in their thoroughness and detail. They provide a very firm foundation on which academic rigour is secured in the teaching. Staff make excellent use of their marking to plan future learning and they set clear targets for pupils to achieve as they move onwards. They give very helpful guidance to ensure that progress is continuous and strong.

Evidence from a range of sources in all classes confirms the very high standards which pupils reach here. This is especially so in English, mathematics and reasoning but also in other subjects, such as music, which is taught by a specialist. Progress is excellent as a result of rigorous teaching finely calibrated to meet the differing needs of specific groups. Where necessary, for example in one of the current classes, pupils are given intensive tuition in order to reach the standards expected. The school's rigorous internal marking and testing provides ample evidence of excellent progress and gives teachers a very good basis on which to plan future teaching.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good throughout the school. Pupils enjoy their schooling a great deal. They participate eagerly in lessons. Attendance is very good. Pupils develop a range of useful skills and positive attitudes as they work through the academic curriculum, the extra-curricular activities, and the assemblies which often have a moral dimension. This is strongly reinforced as they work and cooperate very well with each other within this highly purposeful and civilised school. Pupils develop very well socially. They quickly learn to share, interact, listen, express their views and participate in the wide range of activities provided. They get on with each other and the staff very well. Behaviour is outstanding throughout the school, both in and out of lessons, and this is aided by the highly skilful work of the staff. The school provides a good range of social and cultural experiences. After the entrance examinations in Year 6, for example, pupils have access to an excellent range of interesting activities. Assemblies and some subjects of the curriculum help to give pupils a broad understanding of other cultures and in lessons observed pupils were able to demonstrate this well. A wide range of trips, locally, regionally and overseas, contributes to the pupils' good understanding of other cultures and geographical regions, as well as to their understanding of public institutions in England. The school provides ample opportunities for pupils to take on real responsibilities, for example through the house system, and this also contributes to the excellent running of the school. Pupils are given opportunities to reflect on their lives, and on large moral and spiritual issues, in assemblies and in some of the lessons, though this is not part of a co-ordinated plan for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development throughout the school. Though pupils' development in these areas is good, it is not outstanding, as are other facets of the school, because it lacks time and the benefit of detailed curricular planning and organisation necessary to ensure that all major aspects are covered in depth.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. There is a strong sense of care and concern for the pupils throughout the school. Policies and procedures on matters such as health and safety and child protection are in place and implemented effectively. A programme of staff training for safeguarding children has supported the correct implementation of these policies. The school undertakes checks that are required to ensure that only suitable staff are recruited and appropriate records are kept. The questionnaires completed by parents and pupils indicate that pupils feel safe in school.

There is very appropriate emphasis on healthy living promoted through a wide range of sporting activities during and after school. Healthy eating is given a high priority at lunch-time. Aspects of the development of healthy lifestyles are taught in some subjects. However, the lack of a co-ordinated plan for this currently limits the depth of pupils' learning, compared with that achieved in the academic curriculum. Among the very few criticisms levelled by parents in the resoundingly positive responses to the inspection questionnaire was a justifiable concern that more could be taught about how pupils might live healthily.

Fire drills are held regularly and appropriate records are kept. All fire safety equipment, including alarms, is checked conscientiously. Building and fire risk assessments are carried out and suitably logged. Current arrangements for first aid are good. There are three trained first aiders in the school at all times. The school is aware of the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and has produced an appropriate policy and statement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision for the children in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) settings is outstanding overall and fully meets the requirements set out for this age group. The EYFS is led and managed effectively. The children work and play well together and display good social skills. Their progress in personal and social development and well-being is outstanding. Teaching is good with outstanding features, which include interesting and relevant lessons with many first-hand experiences. The rooms are attractive with a good, varied range of resources to meet the needs of young children. Resources are used imaginatively. The children are encouraged to explore their ideas and be confident when making choices. Planning is good overall, but there are some inconsistencies in the amount of detail contained in the plans for both classes. The space for outdoor play is used well. The small garden area provides valuable experiences, as seen when the youngest children planted spring bulbs. By the end of the EYFS, the children are prepared very well for the next stage of their education. The children have made very good progress and most have started the early stages of the National Curriculum. They are confident, enthusiastic and eager to learn.

Assessment procedures related to the new EYFS framework are at an early stage of development, but there is a significant amount of evidence from previous assessments to indicate that staff assess the children's progress accurately and thoroughly. The children achieve well over time in the kindergarten classes partly due to the effective teamwork of teachers and support staff. They work together well with the aim of doing their best for the children. The teams in both kindergarten classes are successful in this aim. The welfare of the children is conscientiously promoted. Required risk assessments are in place. All policies for the children's welfare and safety are implemented effectively.

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:

- Strengthen provision for pupils' social and health education, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, through better co-ordinated and more detailed planning of the curriculum from Year 1 to Year 6.
- Ensure that curricular planning in both kindergarten classes is closely linked to the Areas of Learning and Development for the early years.

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	Branwood Preparatory School		
DCSF number	3556004		
Unique reference number	105991		
Type of school	Preparatory school with nursery		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1928		
Age range of pupils	3-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 81	Girls: 78	Total: 159
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4950		
Address of school	Stafford Road Monton Eccles Manchester Lancashire M30 9HN		
Telephone number	01617 891054		
Fax number	01617 890561		
Email address	head@branwoodschoo.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr D Davey		
Proprietor	The Branwood School Trust Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Peter Toft HMI		
Dates of inspection	8 October 2008		