

Belmont School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	888/6029
Unique Reference Number	131025
Inspection number	331313
Inspection dates	17 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Greg Sorrell

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 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

Belmont School is an independent special school for boys aged 10 to 16 years who have a statement of special educational needs relating to behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. A small number of students have additional needs including specific learning difficulties. Approximately 20% of the pupils are 'looked after children'. The school opened in September 1996 and currently has 86 students on roll. The school's premises are located in Rawtenstall, Lancashire, part of which was a large former family home. The school has a new proprietor, Acorn Care and Education since the last inspection. The school aims *'to enable each individual to achieve his full potential and develop an understanding of and respect for himself and others, thereby experiencing a sense of fulfilment.'* The school was last inspected in March 2006.

Evaluation of the school

Belmont is a good school which provides a good quality of education for its students. It also makes good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and this is shown in the strong relationships between students and also with staff. Parents and local authorities are very satisfied with the education provided. The school successfully meets its aims. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and all regulations are met.

Quality of education

The quality of education is good. The school provides a good curriculum which meets the needs of students and enables them to make good academic progress. The curriculum is supported by clear policies and comprehensive schemes of work for National Curriculum subjects, personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) and vocational studies. The further development of vocational education is currently an identified priority for the school as is its alternative curriculum for students who experience significant difficulty engaging with more academic subjects. Additional identified needs, such as specific learning difficulties, are addressed through individual support. The recent introduction of 'learning to learn' lessons

shows early promise in encouraging students to persist with study even when they find it difficult. There is a good emphasis on developing students' basic skills and the school offers a wide range of accredited courses for all areas of the curriculum. Where appropriate, work experience and attendance at a college of further education are provided. Extra-curricular activities are offered during breaks and lunch times.

Students make good progress in almost all of their academic work. Progress is particularly good when students receive appropriate support in basic skills and their attendance is good. Difficulties in literacy reduce the potential for some students to access higher academic qualifications. Irregular attendance by a small number of persistent non-attenders reduces their achievements significantly. Nevertheless, students have been successful in a range of GCSE and Entry Level qualifications, gaining passes in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), and design, and geography. Art and ICT continue to be significant strengths. Other vocational awards are gained in preparation for working life, for example, in horticulture.

The quality of teaching is consistently good. Teachers' planning is good and has improved since the last inspection. Typically, lessons begin with a sharing of objectives with opportunities to recap at the end. Relationships between staff and students in lessons and other times are very good. Staff have good subject knowledge and know the students well enough to manage their behaviour well. Staff are successful in minimising students' time out of class due to disruptive behaviour. Each class has a personal support worker who also acts as a teaching assistant. Where they become actively involved in students' learning, they are most effective. Collaborative working is a useful strategy, although occasionally opportunities are missed, for example, when problem solving.

Teachers' marking is typically supportive and helpful with good pointers for further improvement. The explicit guidance for students as to how they can improve their levels of attainment is a feature of good practice. Work is underway, led by the special educational needs co-ordinator, (SENCO) to further improve the school's systems for tracking students' progress and setting precise targets for academic achievement. Individual education plans are of high quality. They give specific targets for improvement that may easily be measured. In some subject reports, there is extensive comment on behaviour but too little about the students' gains in knowledge and understanding. Currently, the school's management team has a wealth of data about progress although the use of this information is underdeveloped in relation to the school's self-evaluation of its effectiveness. Similarly, some targets in the school's overall development plan have success indicators which are difficult to measure. A significant strength of the school's leadership and management is the professional development programme for all staff and especially the support given to teaching assistants to become qualified teachers. Links with local schools also enable staff to share expertise to mutual benefit.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The students frequently arrive at school with a history of disrupted education and low self-esteem as a result of failing in other schools. The vast majority of students respond very well to the school's provision and ethos of high expectations and respect. In discussions with students it is clear that they recognise the ways in which the school has helped them. 'I enjoy coming to school, the staff help you when you are down and they always put us first.' Another wrote, 'I've not been here that long, but they are respectful and I love being here.' A small minority expressed less positive views and a few remain unwilling to attend regularly despite the school's attempts to engage them. For the majority of students, relationships are strong and behaviour is good. For example, during breakfast club and lunchtimes, the students enjoy healthy food and socialising with peers and staff. They respond most positively to the school's system that recognises and rewards good behaviour. Occasionally, some students exhibit disruptive behaviour but they respond positively to sensitive management by staff and time to reflect.

Students show respect for the building and displays of peers' work. The school council gives them experience of democracy and decision-making which supports their study of English institutions within the citizenship programme. Through the curriculum they study other faiths and relationships throughout the school demonstrate racial harmony. The students respond very well to the good role-models provided by all staff. When necessary, they know they can talk to trusted adults, including a qualified visiting counsellor. A wide range of visits is enjoyed as part of the curriculum, for example, trips to centres of culture and adventurous activities in addition to places of worship. The students' artwork is also highly regarded when exhibited in the community. These experiences not only promote the students' cultural development but also their personal development and awareness of appropriate behaviour in and out of school.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The school has a good regard for the students welfare, health and safety. Staff are familiar with a wide range of policies and procedures to promote the students' welfare, health and safety. Risk assessments are systematically carried out and staff are deployed so as to provide good supervision and to ensure students' safety at all times. The school promotes healthy lifestyles well, for example, regular opportunities for physical exercise and a good range of healthy food available at meal times. In PSHCE, students receive helpful information about harmful substances and are encouraged to use this knowledge in other subjects such as English, where they may give a presentation as part of their GCSE English studies.

The school works effectively with other agencies, carers and parents in relation to students' welfare. The school does not yet formally gather and report the views from other agencies about how well it does. However, the views of local authorities who place students at the school are positive. One wrote, 'We enjoy excellent relationships with Belmont who over the years have made a significant and positive difference to the lives of the students we have placed there.' The attention given to preparing the students for life after school is very good. For example, the close

working relationship with Connexions staff and a clear programme that eases the transition from school to college life or employment. There is a clear three year plan which meets with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002.

The school safeguards students well. All staff receive regular training on child protection and the designated person is fully aware of requirements and liaises well with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The school's recent attention to its central staff register has ensured full compliance with regulations. There are robust systems to ensure all necessary checks are carried out when confirming the appointment of staff.

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:

- improve its procedures for self-evaluation by closer analysis of students' academic progress and formally seeking the views of other agencies and parents about the school's effectiveness.
- increase the amount of academic reporting in subject reports.

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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School details

Name of school	Belmont School		
DCSF number	888/6029		
Unique reference number	131025		
Type of school	Special		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 1996		
Age range of pupils	10-16		
Gender of pupils	Boys		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 86	Girls: 0	Total: 86
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 86	Girls: 0	Total: 86
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 19	Girls: 0	Total: 19
Annual fees (day pupils)	£26,148		
Address of school	Haslingden Road Rawtenstall Rossendale Lancashire BB4 6RX		
Telephone number	01706 221043		
Fax number	01706 221043		
Email address	admin@belmont-school.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr M Stobart		
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education		
Reporting inspector	Greg Sorrell		
Dates of inspection	17 September 2008		