

Beech Grove School

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number 886/6073
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Reporting inspector Heather Yaxley

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended.

Age group: 6-16

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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, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.¹

Information about the school

Beech Grove School is situated within the Beech Grove Christian Community site in Kent. Established in 1996 primarily to educate the children of their community, the school is one of two that are owned and run by Church Communities UK, a registered charity with a board of trustees who are also the board of governors for both schools. The school aims to '*educate pupils to be orderly, truthful, caring for the needs and suffering of others, interested in learning and thinking, and disciplined in body*'. All but one of the pupils live within their community and there are currently 80 pupils on roll. Registered pupils include a group of Key Stage 4 students who, for the first time this year, transfer from the proprietor's second school, Darvell in East Sussex, to complete their education at Beech Grove. These students live with community members on site between Mondays and Thursdays. Over the past few years, although registered to admit pupils between four and 16 years, the school has only admitted pupils from six years of age. The school now seeks to amend their registration with the Department of Children, Schools and Families to reflect this change in their admission policy. Prior to admission, any children within the community who are within the Early Years Foundation Stage are now educated at home by their families.

Ofsted last inspected the school in January 2007.

Evaluation of the school

Beech Grove School is a good school, providing a good standard of education, safeguarding and care for its pupils. As a result of very good pastoral care and very close links with families, pupils develop outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills. The relationship between home and school is so strong and so complementary that where one ends and the other begins is not always straightforward. Pupils' outstanding personal skills and behaviour not only reflect the values of their community but prepare them equally well for life outside of the community. The school now complies with the two regulations relating to assessment not met at the time of the last inspection, when the quality of the provision was judged as good. It now meets all but one of the regulations, as although personal, social and health education (PSHE) plays a key part in pupils'

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

development throughout the curriculum, the programme is not planned sufficiently coherently.

Quality of education

The overall quality of education is good. The curriculum is good and provides well to fulfil the aims and values of the school. All of the required areas of learning are taught. The range of subjects and the time allocated to them during each week reflects the school's ethos appropriately. For example, less time is allocated to physical activity, sex education and promoting healthy living because these are agreed responsibilities of pupils' families. Pupils do not use computers in school and information and communication technology is not taught. More time is devoted to English, mathematics, history and geography because these aspects reinforce the community's heritage and pupils' responsibilities as world citizens. Religious education, PSHE and technology, while integral to the school's ethos, happen on an ad hoc basis, relying on teachers maximising opportunities as they arise. Although this reinforces particular values well, the associated knowledge and skills are not sufficiently coherently planned through the curriculum to ensure that all relevant areas are taught. Additionally, with the exception of English and mathematics, curriculum policies and schemes are not sufficiently streamlined and consistent in format to help teachers see links between different subjects and activities.

However, the curriculum has many strengths. The curriculum is particularly effective in getting pupils ready to tackle the next phase or challenge at each stage in their educational journey. By focusing on 'the whole child', the curriculum not only supports the ethos of hard work and perseverance but also builds pupils' confidence and love of learning throughout their schooling. For example, at the age of six years, pupils come to school with no formal understanding of reading, writing or numeracy because their parents are encouraged to read aloud to their children and foster curiosity through play. Teachers then provide good opportunities for pupils to use the wealth of experiences that they bring to the classroom within a formal, well thought through curriculum, which successfully sets the scene for the rest of their education. The curriculum focuses on establishing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills systematically, methodically and slowly through very formal and highly structured schemes of work. In this way, the curriculum ensures that pupils' new learning is founded securely on their prior learning. Accumulated skills are practised before moving on to the next concepts. As a result, when the time comes to write extended pieces or perform complex arithmetic, concepts and skills are confidently applied and high standards achieved. Similarly, for music, pupils have daily opportunities to sing, often in two-part harmony, but music is not taught formally until Year 6 when pupils apply what they know and have experienced with great proficiency.

The curriculum provides well for pupils' personal development through a good range of visits and visitors that give them an insight into different perspectives, experiences, values and beliefs. Visitors include survivors of war, armed services

veterans, the disabled and charity workers. Visits include trips to London, local schools, nursing homes and hospitals.

When they transfer to the high school department in Year 10, students are well-prepared, confident learners ready to take the challenge of significantly increased academic performance and higher expectations for personal study. All students entered have passed GCSEs in English language and literature, mathematics, biology, chemistry, history and German. Most students attain the highest grades and this represents good progress in their learning, as well as good preparation for their future well-being. Most pupils at Beech Grove have attended other schools in other Christian communities, often abroad. Some will move on before finishing their education here. After leaving the school, many students take a year out before undertaking further education or training at local schools or sixth forms.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Significantly, the curriculum supports teachers, many of whom are not formally trained or are new to the school at any one time, by ensuring a framework of continuity and progression within which to plan good lessons. This is particularly the case for English and mathematics and allows teachers to focus on pupils' learning through a multi sensory methodology, simultaneously involving hearing, seeing, saying and writing. The best learning takes place when teachers use what they know about the pupils to plan opportunities to extend, not only their knowledge, but also their understanding of the subject and application of skills. On some occasions, teachers focus too heavily on imparting knowledge and the formal schemes without involving pupils sufficiently in how, what and why they are learning. This means that opportunities for meeting the different needs of individual pupils are sometimes missed, as are opportunities to assess what the pupils know and can do and so extend their thinking. This applies too to teachers' marking of pupils' work, which does not always focus sufficiently on what could be done to improve the work. However, homework is used very effectively by teachers to assess whether pupils have grasped a concept and to identify those who need a little more help. Homework is also an effective means of informing and involving families and is very much appreciated by them. Homework builds up from Year 6 and by Year 10 has a very high profile, deliberately to promote hard work, responsibility and perseverance. For younger pupils, homework reinforces learning with practical application and recall of what has been learned during the day. This information feeds well into lesson plans. In addition, work is formally marked and assessed at the end of each unit of work and this gives teachers an ongoing record of how well pupils are progressing.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their spiritual and cultural awareness is developed particularly well through the curriculum and extended links with many charities and other schools abroad. Pupils have a very well developed sense of world events and current affairs as well as an outstanding understanding of cultural and religious differences. They reflect regularly upon how historical and geographical factors have an impact on the lives of others. They also

reflect upon their own faith and have a very strong identity and appreciation of their own cultural heritage. Pupils' spiritual development is strengthened through their acceptance and understanding of the talents of one another and the contribution that they each make to the wider world as well as to their own community. For example, all pupils made 'wishes' for a couple who were recently married in the community and pupils regularly write letters to children in a Rwandan school. Pupils of all ages show outstanding attendance and behaviour. Occasionally, they may squabble and become over-excited and they are not overly compliant or passive in their learning. Younger pupils play well with each other, genuinely making sure that their friends are not left out. Older students enjoy being part of a bigger group and enjoy friendly banter with one another, as appropriate for the confident, outgoing young people that they are. The formality of school, and its emphasis on obedience as integral to their faith, does not stifle their enjoyment of social relationships, including those between older boys and girls. Pupils of all ages are very complimentary about their school and say that they enjoy school very much, even when they get a lot of homework. By the time they leave school, students are very mature, confident and well prepared for adult life.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

This aspect of the school's work is good because staff are very aware of the potential issues for pupils' well-being in relation to the particular circumstances of the site and of the community's way of life. In addition, there is a very close relationship between the school, pupils' families and the whole community. They complement one another, reinforcing shared values such as growing and providing fresh food, and the importance of regular physical exercise. As a result of ongoing dialogue about pupils' health and safety, there is a range of suitable practices. All of the required policies are in place, including those relating to safeguarding and child protection, but there is sometimes a reliance on shared knowledge rather than precise procedures clearly set out in the policies. Accordingly, policies do not always reflect the good practice and the underlying professional debate. Nevertheless, the headteacher and the proprietors are well-informed and conscientiously keep up-to-date with current regulations, guidance and required training. A suitable three-year accessibility plan is in place in relation to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 to identify and remove any potential barriers to pupils' access to buildings and the curriculum.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

A single central record of the checks made on staff is in place and all staff have an enhanced check from the Criminal Records Bureau. Staff often join the school from overseas and the proprietors quite rightly pay particular attention to checks for this group of staff.

School's premises and accommodation

The school occupies two main buildings, providing suitable accommodation for the effective teaching of the range of activities appropriate for the age of the pupils. All of the accommodation is maintained to a high standard. Students in Years 10 and 11 are taught in the old manor house where there are three main classrooms, including one dedicated to teaching science. Recent alterations have increased the number of washrooms to accommodate more students this year. Other pupils are taught in a purpose-built, single-storey building. This comprises six large classrooms. One classroom is used for the whole school to meet together and also doubles up as a private space for any pupils who become ill. There is also a library, a small group room and an office.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Teachers know their pupils very well and converse regularly with the families so that there is a shared understanding of what is happening in school and how well their children are doing. The quality of reports has improved since the last inspection. Parents are highly involved in the development of the school and are overwhelmingly positive about what it provides for their children.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a suitable complaints policy and there have been no recorded complaints.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ('the Regulations'), with the exception of the one listed below.²

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- provide a coherent, planned programme for personal, social and health education which reflects the aims and ethos of the school (paragraph 1(2)(f)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

² www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.htm

- review and streamline curriculum policies so that they accurately reflect the breadth of the school's ethos and aims
- improve the consistency of teachers' plans so that the focus on assessment of how and why pupils are learning is as strong a focus as what they are learning.

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 good are the outcomes for children in the EYFS?				
What is the quality of provision in the EYFS?				
How effectively is the EYFS led and managed?				
Overall effectiveness: how well does the school meet the needs of children in the EYFS?				

The quality of boarding provision *(leave blank if not applicable)*

Evaluation of boarding provision				
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School details

Name of school	Beech Grove School		
DCSF number	886/6073		
Unique reference number	131181		
Type of school	Independent Christian		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 1996		
Age range of pupils	6-16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 39	Girls: 41	Total: 80
Annual fees (day pupils)	£0-£3,000		
Address of school	Beech Grove Sandwich Road Nonington Kent CT15 4HH		
Telephone number	01304 842980		
Fax number	01304 843734		
Email address	bgrschoolsec@mailstack.com		
Headteacher	Mr Benjamin Shirky		
Proprietor	Church Communities UK		
Reporting inspector	Heather Yaxley HMI		
Dates of inspection	30 September-1 October 2009		