

# Bladon House School

Independent school inspection report

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Unique Reference Number (URN)	113019
URN for registered childcare and social care	SC 020137
Inspection number	344414
Inspection dates	3-4 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Judith Charlesworth
Social care inspectors	Jackie Callaghan and Jo Vyas

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A<sup>1</sup> of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005<sup>2</sup>, 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.

An inspection of the care provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the national minimum standards for children's homes. This inspection took place at the same time but the full report is published separately on Ofsted's website and should be read in conjunction with this report which covers the educational registration of the school.

## Information about the school

Bladon House is an independent special school for boys and girls with complex needs including autism, severe or moderate learning difficulties, mental health issues, challenging behaviour and speech and language difficulties. The school caters for both day and residential pupils, and was registered as a children's home in July 2009. Most residential pupils live on site with two further residential homes situated a short distance away. The school is registered for 130 pupils aged 5 to 19, but numbers are reducing as the complexity of pupils' needs is increasing. Pupils are admitted at any age, but a number are admitted towards the end of their compulsory school career. There are currently 53 pupils on roll aged 10 to 19, with the large majority aged 16 and over. All pupils have a statement of their special educational needs and are funded by their local authorities.

The school is owned and managed by the SENAD group which has several other establishments providing education and care for pupils and adults with learning difficulties. The school opened in 1969. Its last education inspection was in March 2007 and the last social care inspection took place in January 2009.

The school's aim is, 'to realise the full potential of children and young people with special educational needs through the provision of high quality education in a caring and supportive environment.'

## Evaluation of the school

Bladon House School successfully meets its stated aims and provides an outstanding quality of education. Pupils make outstanding progress in their academic skills and personal development because the curriculum and provision for their care, welfare, health and safety are excellent. Teaching is good overall and is very well supported

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

by high quality assessment practices. The school's safeguarding procedures are robust and effective. The school has improved its educational provision and accommodation considerably since the last education inspection and meets all but one of the regulations.

## Quality of education

The school's outstanding education provision is underpinned by an excellent curriculum that is very well devised to meet the needs of pupils of all ages and abilities. The curriculum is very effectively supported by the residential activity programme and a variety of enrichment and additional activities, such as working towards the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Appropriate emphasis is given to the core subjects of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), communication and literacy, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT). PSHCE is given very high priority because of the particular needs of the pupils. Progress is outstanding in this area and underpins the pupils' ability to learn and make progress across all curriculum subjects. The curriculum aims to accredit as much of pupils' learning as possible and is very successful in this.

The excellent organisation of the curriculum changes in each key stage which helps pupils to mature. For Key Stages 2 and 3, the curriculum is based on the National Curriculum programmes of study. Key Stage 4 pupils have a more practical, work and vocational emphasis, as recommended, which prepares them well for adult life. The post-16 curriculum has developed considerably since the last inspection. Individuals in this age group have highly personalised timetables and much of their education appropriately takes place in the community to encourage real-life learning. The school's recent emphasis on enterprise, through the National Team Enterprise initiative, has had excellent results. Pupils have the opportunity of working in their own business which focuses on horticulture, small animal husbandry, catering and retailing. The school has a close partnership with a local secondary school which, as a specialist arts college, enhances pupils' opportunities in art and design as well as other subjects. It additionally offers them valuable social opportunities, for example by showing their work in the school's gallery.

Teaching and assessment are good. Some of the teaching is outstanding. Its quality is supported by robust management which provides helpful policies and guidance. Lessons are regularly monitored by senior managers and by the SENAD group, and weaknesses are appropriately addressed. Strengths in teaching are the relationships between pupils and staff; consistent behaviour management; work that is tailored to meet individuals' needs, and very well-devised planning. Occasional weaknesses include tasks which are not matched to pupils' needs and drab teaching. Pupils clearly enjoy their lessons. Sometimes this is evident in the fact that they are engaged and willing participants. For others, it is evident in their independence and enthusiasm for learning. On one occasion, for example, a pupil discussed at length how an artist had used three views of the subject to create his work, and offered parallels in his own work. On another occasion, a younger pupil exclaimed 'Oh, I love

doing that!' in relation to working with numbers up to a million. Each lesson is carefully planned to further pupils' learning in the subject and also to give each individual the opportunity to work towards their personal targets, derived from rigorous assessment processes and closely linked to their individual education plans. This planning is exemplary.

Pupils' academic attainment on entry ranges from very low to broadly average. All pupils have additional difficulties which often include challenging behaviour. Information collection shows that pupils make outstanding progress towards the subjects being studied and personal targets. Portfolios of work in subjects except English, mathematics, science and ICT do not outline different levels of pupils' attainment. Cohorts are too small to make statistics significant, although the school is meticulous in gathering and analysing such data. However, a range of information demonstrates individuals' outstanding progress. For some pupils, this is evident in the measurable academic progress they make, which can exceed national expectations. For others, the emphasis is on their outstanding personal development which gives them the tools for academic learning. For example, on arrival, some pupils are unable to walk from one room to another without very lengthy periods of negotiation and support, often requiring two or more adults. This behaviour usually diminishes so that students can engage in lessons, learn and make progress at a rate in line with their abilities.

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

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their personal development is strongly supported by outstanding relationships with staff, and the school's commitment to providing an environment that supports all aspects of the pupils' development.

The school gives pupils many opportunities for spiritual growth, and they respond very well. Higher attaining pupils, for example, appreciate and talk about the beauty of art and the local countryside. They show empathy for their peers and recognise their own feelings and those of others. All pupils become more confident and develop self-esteem as they learn how to manage their behaviour more effectively, and to relate more appropriately to others. Behaviour is good. Most pupils' behaviour is exemplary and sets the tone for very enjoyable, well-run lessons where pupils' attitudes are outstanding. A few pupils' behaviour is challenged by their complex needs, but this generally diminishes over time due to expert interventions. The pupils develop an understanding of right and wrong and know that actions have consequences. According to their ability, they come to understand the basic institutions, services and rules of a democratic society. The reward system, worked out to meet each individual's needs and interests, contributes very effectively to improvement in pupils' behaviour and personal development. The pupils' cultural development is supported effectively by a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities such as celebrations of cultural festivals and visits to places of interest. The school's inclusive nature in relation to its own diverse population

provides a good context for supporting racial harmony and pupils' cultural tolerance. However, although improved since the last inspection, pupils still have limited sustained contact with minority cultures.

Pupils enjoy school. The attendance of many day pupils in comparison to that in their previous schools shows significant improvement. All pupils respond well to the activities provided, and some are able to verbalise this. For example, one pupil wrote: 'I am getting on at this school and thank you... it is teaching me a lesson how to be good and... how to do my life'. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school and local community. They become well-prepared for their future well-being as they develop personal autonomy and academic, social and communication skills. Pupils undertake a number of fund-raising activities for charities, make recommendations about school improvements, and help care for the school environment. Through Enterprise work, they grow, make and sell items in the community, 'at a reasonable price using methods to produce them which are kind to the earth and environment'.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school makes outstanding provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils. The school gained a five star award by the British Safety Council in December 2009 in respect of safety organisation and a number of other systems such as those related to fire control and their implementation. The school has an exemplary focus on safeguarding pupils. All procedures, including those for child protection, are robust and very well implemented and monitored. All policies required by the regulations are in place, supported by a wide range of further documents including school-specific, SENAD and commercially available policies and guidance. As a result of this 'belt and braces' approach, however, the policies are not always user-friendly. Staff training is up-to-date and excellent administrative systems ensure refresher training is continuous. The school has a very thorough approach to risk assessment for individuals and all activities undertaken on- and off-site. All relevant staff have immediate access to, and comply with, these assessments. Attendance registers are properly maintained, however, the admissions register does not include an alphabetical entry of pupils as required.

The consideration for pupils' individual needs and physical and emotional wellbeing is outstanding. Each pupil has a personally tailored curriculum, environment, intervention plan, reward and sanction system, timetable, residential accommodation and adult support as required. Therapies and external professional support, for example, through psychologists and psychiatrists, are provided according to pupils' statements and needs. These alter as pupils' needs change. The school focuses closely on helping pupils to stay safe and lead healthy lives. A number of opportunities are provided for them to develop a better sense of danger-awareness. Various strategies are used to support the pupils' mental health and help them stay calm and access education. For example, by the provision of a structured sensory 'diet' that includes deep pressure and brief periods of exercise. Physical activity,

walking and healthy eating are strongly promoted. Pupils with eating disorders are supported to become healthier and happier, and those with self-imposed restrictive diets are supported to widen their food intake. Pupils know how to report any worries. They turn readily to staff and can complete a 'pink form', with or without support, to record their concerns. These are taken seriously, and properly dealt with.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Regulations are met in relation to ensuring staff are suitable to work with children and young people. All relevant checks are made and documented as required.

## School's premises and accommodation

The school's accommodation is satisfactory. It is situated on a large site in extensive grounds and supports pupils' personal and learning needs adequately. The school comprises an attractive central main building which was formerly a large country house, and a number of permanent modular buildings which house teaching rooms and a gymnasium. Additional teaching areas, including those for art and food technology, are sited on the ground floor of one of the residential buildings. The grounds include varied grass and hard-surfaced areas and give students ample opportunity for sporting and leisure pursuits, and 'cooling-down' activities.

The school is well-maintained, although the flat roofs of the modular buildings present a constant maintenance challenge. It provides a safe, clean and tidy environment. The school is in satisfactory decorative order and in some rooms, depending on individuals' particular needs, this is enhanced by attractive displays of pupils' work. The school's accommodation has allowed the successful development of the pupils' business enterprise 'Time to Grow'. This has its own accommodation and makes excellent use of the grounds for small animal husbandry and horticulture.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides parents, carers and others with all the required information, and much more. The clear, informative prospectus is up-to-date and includes an extensive list of additional policies, documentation and information that is available on request. Documentation is also available on the school's website which is similarly up-to-date and maintained efficiently by the SENAD group. The school's rigorous approach to the education and care of its pupils is such that there are a number of policies which overlap somewhat so that the information is not always completely straightforward to find. Additional information about events and the school's work is regularly provided to parents and carers, and good relationships with local authorities ensure they are kept fully informed about the pupils they place, including how their funding is used.

High quality annual reports are written for parents and carers on each pupil's attainment and academic progress, and additional reports are also written for other reviews. These reports are very effectively linked to pupils' individual education plans and their personal targets for improvement.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school's policy and procedure for handling complaints meet all regulations.

## Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The care provision was judged to be good, and national minimum standards were met. A full report on the care provision is available on Ofsted's website and should be viewed in conjunction with this report.

## 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 that listed below.<sup>3</sup>

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- maintain an admission register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 3(9)).

Please see the report on Ofsted's website relating to the care provision in the children's home which should be read in conjunction with this report.

## What the school could do to improve further

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

- Review all policies systematically to ensure they fully reflect the particular circumstances at Bladon House and provide simple, clear guidance.
- Develop portfolios of work that exemplify different levels of attainment in the foundation subjects, similar to those developed for the core subjects.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.htm](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.htm)

## 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 boarding provision

Evaluation of boarding provision		✓		
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## School details

Name of school	Bladon House School		
DCSF number	830/6009		
Unique reference number (URN)	113019		
Type of school	Special School		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1969		
Age range of pupils	5–19		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 42	Girls: 11	Total: 53
Number of boarders	Boys: 32	Girls: 11	Total: 43
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 42	Girls: 11	Total: 53
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 1	Girls: 2	Total: 3
Annual fees (day pupils)	£62,169		
Annual fees (boarders)	£116,977		
Telephone number	01283 563787		
Fax number	01283 510 980		
Email address	Katebritt@bladonhouse.com		
Headteacher	Kate Britt		
Proprietor	SENAD		
Reporting inspector	Judith Charlesworth		
Dates of inspection	3-4 February 2010		