

Benedict House Preparatory School

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number	303/606
Unique Reference Number (URN)	101484
Inspection number	348777
Inspection dates	29 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002¹, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², 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.

This was a light touch inspection 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

Benedict House is a co-educational preparatory school for pupils aged three to eleven years. It was founded in 1989, and is located in Kent on the outskirts of London. There are currently 69 pupils on roll, with Early years children fully intergrated into the primary department. No children are in receipt of government nursery funding. The school is non-selective but very few pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The school aims, 'to bring the benefits of self-improvement and confidence through the enjoyment of school life.' There have been very recent changes in senior management.

The first published inspection report for the school was in October 2007 when the school met most of the regulations for registration.

Evaluation of the school

Benedict House Preparatory School provides a good quality of education and successfully meets its aims. The good teaching and curriculum, excellent relationships between staff and pupils, and the expectation that pupils will try their best to achieve their potential ensure that pupils make good progress. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding and arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are good. Behaviour is outstanding. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that children make a good start to their education. Most parents hold a very positive view of the school, making comments such as: 'We are extremely pleased with our daughter's development and progress.' The school has addressed the issues for improvement raised at the last inspection and now meets all of the regulations.

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

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

Quality of education

The quality of education is good, as at the last inspection. The school provides a good curriculum offering a broad range of subjects with a carefully planned balance of time to each. As a result, pupils make good progress as they move through the school. The school takes full account of the curriculum guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage to plan an interesting programme of activities appropriate for the age and stage of development of pupils in the Nursery and Reception class. The great majority of these pupils exceed the expected early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 are taught all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education (RE). There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' key skills, such as speaking and listening, writing and numeracy. Pupils learn French and Spanish from Year 1. Some specialist coaching is provided for French, Spanish, music and for physical education and games from Years 1 to 6, and all pupils have the opportunity to swim regularly. Good use is made of off-site facilities for physical activities. The school's programme for personal, social and health education and citizenship clearly reflects its aims and ethos.

The curriculum is enhanced by a range of visits outside school and visitors to the school. Pupils have recently had a tour of the Houses of Parliament and the older pupils have the opportunity to take part in a residential trip to Holland.

Teaching and assessment are good overall, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, although there is some variability in the quality of lessons. By the end of Year 6, pupils have made good progress, reached high standards and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Year 6 pupils sit examinations for local selective schools and the current pupils have all been successful in achieving their choice of schools.

Teachers are knowledgeable, confident and well prepared for lessons. There is no standard lesson planning format and consequently an opportunity is lost for teachers to indicate consistently how they will design learning to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities. However, the overall learning objective for each lesson is always suitably set out. The most skilful teachers ensure that their lessons proceed at a good pace and pupils' learning benefits accordingly. In some cases, there is over-reliance on the use of worksheets to support learning and this can take away pupils' responsibility for generating their own ideas. Teachers and their assistants have developed positive relationships with the pupils, who show great respect towards the adults in school as a result. Marking has improved since the last inspection and teachers are offering more useful feedback on pupils' work in the form of judgements on quality and advice on improvement. Teachers and pupils find that using the computers in the information and communication technology (ICT) suite is a challenge as the equipment is out of date. Pupils enjoy their lessons and behaviour is outstanding. Their speaking and listening skills are extremely well developed; consequently, the quality of creative and factual writing is of a high standard. For example, Year 2 pupils wrote and illustrated imaginative 'pirate logs'. The school has devised a range of effective assessment procedures. The pupils take national examinations and

achieve good results. A range of standardised tests enable the teachers to track pupils' learning effectively. Parents are kept regularly informed of pupils' progress with written reports and consultation meetings.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The school is a happy, welcoming place and the pupils confirm they like coming to school, as confirmed by their excellent attendance. They make comments such as, 'It's brilliant', 'everyone is friends here' and 'we have lots of fun.' Relationships are very positive and each pupil is very well known as an individual. RE lessons contribute to the pupils' spiritual awareness when they learn about world religions. Their sense of awe and wonder is effectively promoted; for example one pupil showed all the others a container with butterflies he had watched hatch the previous day. This is a very sociable community with all the pupils playing well together at playtimes. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and they are very polite and courteous to visitors. They have helped to devise their own simple school rules and these are followed. The pupils are adamant that there is no bullying and they are all friends together. Older pupils have the opportunity to take initiatives in various ways and the school council is proving beneficial as pupils feel they have a voice. They have very positive attitudes to learning. Their knowledge of themselves and their self-esteem and confidence are developed effectively. Pupils enjoy and participate enthusiastically in the full range of school activities and take part in school drama productions. They help to initiate and take part in a range of charity and fund-raising activities. Pupils' basic skills, including their personal skills, together with their awareness of public services and institutions, prepare them well for their future working lives. Racial harmony is effectively promoted with pupils from different backgrounds and cultures mixing well.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The school continues to make good provision to safeguard and promote the welfare, health and safety of the pupils throughout the school. The very friendly and caring ethos in the school ensures that pupils feel valued and safe. Pupils know that staff care for them well. The school has devised and effectively implements a wide range of policies that minimise the health and safety risks to pupils. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are good. The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding and all staff, including the designated member of staff, have received appropriate training. This is an improvement since the last inspection when staff required additional training in child protection. Thorough checks are completed prior to the appointment of new staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. This information is held on a single central register as required. The school's arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of pupils are fully implemented. There are very good arrangements for fire safety; fire drills are held regularly and recorded; a specialist company checks fire-fighting equipment and a comprehensive

fire risk assessment is in place. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of healthy lifestyles, both through their healthy eating choices in their packed lunches and their enjoyment of physical activity. Since the last inspection, the school has fulfilled its duties with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended, and has prepared a three-year accessibility plan. The school now has a suitable medical room. At the last inspection, there were a small number of regulations not met regarding the provision of information for parents and carers. They now have access to all the required information.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are met well through the good provision which leads to good outcomes. The overall effectiveness is good. Children are happy and smiling, obviously enjoy their time at the school and playing with their friends. They are fully integrated with the pupils in the primary department and benefit from frequent contact with them. They make good progress towards the early learning goals in most areas of learning according to their starting point. Many achieve the majority of the early learning goals by the end of their Reception Year. Children make good progress in developing personal qualities that enable them to take responsibility for making decisions for themselves and developing skills for their future. They play well on their own and all the children, including those from different cultures and backgrounds, play well together. Relationships are very good and the kind and caring staff make sure that all children are included in the activities. Health and safety arrangements are good and the environment is a safe place for the children, although the school has not yet fenced off the recently developed outdoor play area, which is adjacent to the school playground.

The children behave very well and respond very positively to the staff, who know them very well. There are strong links with parents and carers, who responded positively to the pre-inspection questionnaire. They are kept well informed about their children's progress. Staff make very regular written observations on the children's activities and these are used well to compile an accurate record of their progress and development. Children develop good speaking and listening skills, supported by staff using skilful questioning techniques. For example, while making flags to represent different nations, the children had to compare illustrations of flags and devise ways to reproduce them, with staff providing good support. The adults' good knowledge of the children's learning and developmental stages helps promote their welfare and progress. The welcoming, attractive rooms, which are well resourced, are conducive to the children's learning. The well-planned range of activities includes a good balance between those initiated by children and by staff. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. There is a common sense of purpose between those working with the children to ensure that all have the opportunity to achieve as well as they can.

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.

- Ensure that the teachers plan the learning to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities.
- Update the provision for ICT.
- Provide fencing for the Early Years Foundation Stage outdoor play area.

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?		✓		

School details

Name of school	Benedict House Preparatory School		
DCSF number	303/6060		
Unique Reference Number (URN)	101484		
Type of school	Preparatory		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	5 January 1989		
Age range of pupils	3–11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 26	Girls: 39	Total: 65
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 1	Girls: 3	Total: 4
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 6,765 - £7,185		
Address of school	1–5 Victoria Road Sidcup Kent DA15 7HD		
Telephone number	020 83007206		
Email address	secretary@benedicthouseprepschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Ali Khan		
Proprietor	Alpha Schools		
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton		
Dates of inspection	29 June 2010		