

# Bertrum House School

Independent school standard inspection report

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DfE registration number	212/6351
Unique Reference Number (URN)	101079
Inspection number	385069
Inspection dates	5–6 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Susan Gadd HMI

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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, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## Information about the school

Bertrum House School is an independent pre-preparatory and nursery school that provides for children aged two to seven years of age. The school was opened in 1984. It is housed in two church buildings close to each other in Balham in south-west London. The Rowfant Road building has a playgroup, nursery and one of the two pre-Reception classes. In the Balham High Road building there is the second pre-Reception class, one Reception and a Year 1 and Year 2 class.

There are currently 112 children on roll, 95 of these children range from two years and nine months up to seven years old. Of these, 26 pupils are in Key Stage 1 and 69 children are in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Forty nine children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are part time. The school receives nursery funding for 51 children. There are currently no pupils with a statement of special educational needs.

In addition, the nursery admits children aged from two years and six months to three years and was last inspected in 2004. This provision is awaiting re-registration and was therefore not a part of this inspection. Twice weekly the school runs a playgroup for one and a half hours for children aged two. This was also not a part of this inspection.

Bertrum House was last inspected in 2008. A new Principal was appointed in September 2011. The school aims to inspire: 'a love of learning in pupils by providing a full, enriching curriculum in which pupils all have equal opportunities for learning; a well trained staff, and close home-school partnerships'.

## Evaluation of the school

Bertrum House successfully meets its aims and provides a good quality of education. Pupils of all ages make good progress as a result of the good curriculum and teaching. Pupils' exceptional behaviour and good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensure that they develop into confident, well-rounded individuals. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The school takes good steps to ensure that pupils of all ages feel safe through its regard for their

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

health, welfare and safety and rigorous arrangements for safeguarding. A significant improvement since the last inspection is that the school now meets all the regulations for independent schools and has a systematic, regular cycle for reviewing policies and ensuring that all staff receive the appropriate training.

## **Quality of education**

The quality of the curriculum is good. In the Early Years Foundation Stage the curriculum is closely linked to literacy, numeracy and the other required areas of learning, with a strong emphasis on practical experiences. This good curriculum continues into Key Stage 1. Here the curriculum is closely matched to the National Curriculum, supported by teachers' own planning and published resources. Some lessons such as Mandarin, French, music, dance, swimming and drama are taught by specialist teachers. The school places a strong emphasis on developing pupils' skills, both socially and academically. This can be seen through the weekly lessons in citizenship and regular assemblies as well as daily lessons in literacy and numeracy. Geography and history are taught through a topic approach in which pupils are able to develop design and technology along with information and communication technology (ICT) skills. This topic approach, enhanced with a range of day trips and speakers, provides pupils with a meaningful and enjoyable context in which to learn. Pupils particularly enjoy the after-school clubs such as cooking and football and the opportunity to perform to parents and carers throughout the year.

Teaching and assessment are good throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Where teaching and assessment are at their strongest, pupils are clear about the learning focus within the lesson. Good subject knowledge, clear modelling of language and effective questioning ensure that pupils make good progress. The use of practical resources linked to real contexts for learning ensures that pupils are keen and eager to learn. In one class pupils were applying their knowledge about instructional writing by inventing their own games and writing instructions for their peers to use. In another lesson pupils were encouraged to share their ideas through the use of 'talk partners'; this was stimulated by the effective use of the interactive whiteboard and music to develop their understanding of adjectives when writing a scene to a story. On occasions however, the use of 'talk partners' during the introduction to lessons was limited. Teaching assistants are used effectively to support pupils' learning in group work; however, this good practice is not always present during introductions to lessons.

Teachers carry out regular assessments throughout the school so that individual pupils' progress can be measured. In the Early Years Foundation Stage observations identify individual children's starting points and progress. In Key Stage 1 pupils are assessed in their literacy and numeracy through routine tests and teacher assessments. On the whole these are used appropriately to guide and inform planning and teaching. However, the school is now considering the development of a whole-school tracking document so that the progress made by different groups of

pupils is easier to analyse and the approach taken to recording assessment results becomes more uniform across the whole school.

Pupils are able to talk about their targets in literacy and numeracy and understand how these support their learning. Pupils sit external entrance examinations in Year 2 and as a result of the good progress they have made they are successful in gaining entry into their school of choice.

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

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This is a small school in which all pupils are known well by adults. The school has successfully created a caring, nurturing environment in which pupils are able to develop into confident, happy individuals. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and this is reflected in their outstanding behaviour, high attendance and positive attitudes to learning. Pupils work well together and respect each other's differences. They are clear about the importance of right and wrong behaviours and how rules help to keep them safe.

Pupils' cultural development is enhanced through religious education where they explore a range of religions and celebrations from around the world. Theme weeks such as 'international week' are enhanced by parents and carers talking about their experiences and sharing their cultural heritage. During the inspection, pupils talked with enthusiasm about a school open day where they were able to experience different cultures by visiting stalls representing different countries.

Pupils are proud of their contributions to the school and wider community. In school they enjoy being a 'buddy' and are given class responsibilities. All pupils in Year 2 take on a responsibility, including supporting each other in the classroom and helping others in roles such as playtime monitors. In the wider community pupils support a variety of charities including national charities such as 'Red Nose Day' and local charities that the pupils have chosen. For example last year they raised over £3000 to support families in hospital. The school is shortly to introduce a school council to further develop a 'pupil voice'. During the inspection pupils held their annual Harvest Festival where they contributed food to a local charity that supports the homeless. As a consequence of good social development and the good acquisition of basic skills, pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their school life.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

Pupils' welfare, health and safety are good throughout the school. Pupils say they feel very safe and are confident to turn to adults if they need support. All relevant policies and procedures, such as those for safeguarding and health and safety, including risk assessments, are in place and effectively implemented. Child protection procedures are robust and regulations for fire safety are met in full. Pupils are supervised appropriately at lunchtime and breaks. As a result of the school's curriculum and encouragement to eat healthy snacks, pupils are clear about the

importance of staying healthy. As one child stated, 'It is important to eat healthy food. If you eat too many sweets you get rotten teeth.'

The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

### **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

The school implements safe recruitment procedures and carries out all required checks on the suitability of the proprietor and staff to work with children. A single central register of staff checks is in place; this meets all requirements.

### **Premises and accommodation at the school**

Both school buildings are safe, light and airy. Classrooms are bright and colourful as a result of a range of displays celebrating pupils' work and information to support their learning. On both sites there is appropriate space for pupils to play and learn outside the classroom.

### **Provision of information**

The school's website, starter pack and prospectus provide all the required information for parents, carers and others. The 'Bertrum Bulletin' along with regular letters ensures that parents and carers are kept well informed of school events. Parental views are gathered through class and parent and carer representatives who meet regularly with the headteacher. Interim reports are sent out to parents and carers twice a year so that they are kept well informed about their child's success and future targets. Fifty five parents and carers completed inspection questionnaires. A very large majority of the comments were very positive about the work of the school. One parent stated: 'An amazing school – the teachers are patient, respectful, friendly and informative.'

### **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

All regulations are met by the complaints policy which is referred to in the school prospectus and is available on the school website.

### **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The provision both in pre-Reception and Reception on both sites is good. Strong induction arrangements help children settle quickly into school and make a positive start to their education. Effective relationships between adults and children ensure that children are happy, safe and confident in all settings in this provision. Key workers know the children as individuals and work very effectively with parents, carers and children. As a result of these good communication systems and very strong relationships children make good progress and achieve good outcomes. One parent

stated, 'The teachers take interest in every child and always have time to discuss anything with you, leaving myself as a parent feeling confident and secure that my child is in the best possible place.'

The well-planned curriculum covers literacy, numeracy and the other required areas of learning and distinguishes well between the needs of children in pre-Reception and those in Reception. In pre-Reception, 'news books' are sent home to provide parents and carers with the opportunity to write about any significant family events. Children have the opportunity to take home a cuddly toy and parents, carers and children together complete diaries about their weekend experiences with the toy.

The quality of teaching is good. Adult observations of children's learning are discussed in regular meetings which inform future planning. Adults use their observations to help target questioning and this, along with the use of first-hand experiences, ensures that children play well together and cooperate with one another. There is a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated learning. The learning environment indoors is bright, well decorated and spacious, with walls covered with colourful charts for learning. This, along with examples of children's everyday work, creates a stimulating environment in which to learn.

The use of the outdoor area in supporting children's learning varied in effectiveness in the sessions observed. Where it is used well it enhances learning to ensure that there is a good transition between indoor learning and outdoor experiences. However, on occasion activity in the outdoor area is not sufficiently structured to reinforce prior learning that has taken place in adult-led sessions within the classroom.

The quality of leadership and management is good. All staff are focused on ensuring that children make good progress in their learning and development. Adults work well together and share information through regular meetings. There is a clear understanding of the provision's strengths and areas for development. Robust steps have been taken to safeguard children, including vetting procedures for all adults who work with children.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

## **What the school could do to improve further**

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

- Develop a whole-school assessment tracking document so that the progress made by different groups of pupils is easier to analyse and the approach taken to recording assessment becomes more uniform across the whole school.
- Ensure that teaching assistants are used effectively to support pupils' learning in the introduction to lessons.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, ensure that activity in the outdoor area is always sufficiently structured to reinforce prior learning that has taken place in adult-led sessions within the classroom.

## Inspection judgements

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

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		

## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Pre-preparatory and Nursery		
<b>Date school opened</b>	1984		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–7 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 29	Girls: 17	Total: 46
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 30	Girls: 19	Total: 49
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£4,215 to £10,920		
<b>Address of school</b>	290 Balham High Road, London SW17 7AL		
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8767 4051		
<b>Email address</b>	bhmanager@googlemail.com		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Kirsty Pirrie		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Ms Lindsay Badenoch		

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**

7 October 2011

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Bertrum House School, Wandsworth, SW17 7AL**

As you know, I visited your school recently with one other inspector. We would like to thank those of you who talked to us about your work and life at the school. We really enjoyed meeting you, your teachers and everyone else who works in the school. Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming; you made our visit very enjoyable. We found that your school provides you with a good quality of education.

These are some of the best things about your school.

- You make good progress in your work and really enjoy coming to school and feel very safe.
- You enjoy learning about a range of cultures, raising money for charities that you have chosen and being responsible for helping those around you.
- Your behaviour is exceptional, which helps to make your school a happy place to learn.
- The school makes every effort to make your curriculum fun through your topics, providing day visits to places of interest, theatre trips and providing you with opportunities to share your work with your parents and carers.
- The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. All adults know you well and take great care of you.

We have asked your school to do the following things.

- Make sure that your school develops a system of using the information they have on your progress to ensure that adults are doing all they can to help you learn as much as possible.
- Ensure that all adults help to improve your learning during the introduction to lessons.
- Make sure that the outside area is used well to help children learn in Pre-Reception and Reception.

All of you can help by continuing to work hard in lessons.

Yours sincerely  
Susan Gadd  
Her Majesty's Inspector