

Bertrum House School

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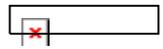
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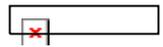
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Introduction and summary

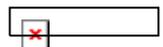


Purpose and scope of the inspection



This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

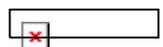
Information about the school



Bertrum House School opened in 1984. It is an independent pre-preparatory and nursery school for boys and girls aged from two and a half to seven years of age. There are 107 pupils on roll. It is housed on two sites, a few minutes apart, in extensive property rented from local churches. It serves the local area of Balham in south London and is registered for the Nursery Education Grant Scheme.

The school aims to be a "small, happy, family school with an emphasis on creative and academic excellence". It is broadly Christian-based seeking also to teach children to respect and understand other religions, festivals and customs. The curriculum "is designed to provide a strong educational base for children of different abilities and to develop their full potential." The school aims to give high priority to pupils' social development and the staffing levels enable them to be taught in small groups.

Summary of main findings



environment in which the pupils do well. Academic attainment is very good. The curriculum gives an emphasis to the development of language, literacy and numeracy skills while also providing many opportunities for creative and artistic expression. All other aspects of personal development are strongly promoted. The pupils are articulate and confident. Teaching is very good and the teachers work hard to produce an attractive and stimulating learning environment. The school is well run on a day-to-day basis and the headteacher provides very good direction for school development.

What the school does well

- it provides very good teaching throughout the whole school;
- it enables pupils to achieve very well and move on to schools of their choice;
- it provides a very good range of educational experiences and opportunities;
- it creates an exciting and stimulating learning environment; and
- it promotes very good social development and pupils' self-confidence.

What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations

- implement a policy for off-site visits as noted in section 3 of this report.

Next steps

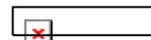
Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- continue implementation and development of the school improvement plan especially in the areas of assessment, monitoring and evaluation.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum



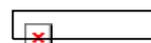
The curriculum is very good. It is appropriate for the age of the pupils at the school and meets their needs. It provides them with opportunities to develop their knowledge in all subjects of the National Curriculum (NC). Religious education (RE) is taught weekly and French is taught from the reception year onwards. Specialist teaching of music, drama, physical education, French, dancing and swimming enables pupils to achieve well in these subjects. The school gives strong emphasis to the pupils' personal development through its planned programme for personal, social and health education which includes aspects of citizenship. Information and communication technology is taught to older pupils as a separate subject and is used effectively to support learning throughout the school.

Detailed schemes of work for all subjects ensure suitable content and coverage of the NC. Medium-term plans are used effectively by staff to plan their weekly programme and daily lessons. These detailed lesson plans are instrumental in helping to translate successfully theory into practice. Teachers' planning focuses clearly on progression in the key skills of literacy, numeracy, speaking and listening. Curricular provision and classroom support for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The curriculum prepares pupils well for the entrance examinations they take for the next stage of their education. Older pupils' class work is extended by the provision of weekly homework which builds on what they have learnt in school.

The school uses the national guidance for the Foundation Stage very effectively to enable staff to plan challenging lessons for younger pupils. It provides a very good range of well-planned and appropriate activities covering the six areas of learning with opportunities for both child-initiated and teacher-led activities.

An interesting range of educational visits enhances pupils' learning. During the last year these have included a visit to the theatre, museums, a nature centre for pond dipping and Brighton beach. The school benefits from frequent visitors which recently have included a juggling circus and educational interpretations of life as a Victorian child. Drama, dancing and sport enhance the school curriculum through a further range of extra-curricular activities, including football for both girls and boys. These are well attended and pupils participate enthusiastically.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



The quality of teaching throughout the pre-preparatory and nursery departments is very good. All teachers plan their daily work carefully and often in great detail. At the beginning of each lesson an introductory session is used to question the pupils about their current knowledge. In these sessions teachers use good questioning skills to encourage pupils to talk freely about the subject. This contributes to clear thinking and the development of good speaking and listening skills. When a new topic is introduced teachers take time to explain what the pupils are going to learn about.

During lessons pupils are given very good individual support by the teachers and other adults working with them. Time is taken to ensure that they all understand the work they are doing before moving on. Occasionally this may slow the pace of the lesson and some pupils are capable of working more quickly. Whether working individually or in groups the pupils apply effort to their work and display a very responsible attitude towards learning. Younger pupils in the nursery are also given very good support during their activities and staff take time to help with new learning. They are particularly good at developing early speech and language skills.

Materials, resources and activities are carefully prepared for each lesson. Using real coins for mathematical work on money and real artefacts for historical studies strengthen pupils' understanding of the real world. They have easy access to daily resources, like colouring pencils

and art materials, which they are beginning to choose with increasing confidence. This encourages pupils to be independent and to take more responsibility for their own learning. In allowing pupils some freedom within lessons, teachers encourage and promote good behaviour. The pupils respond well to this.

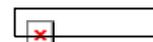
Teachers use a range of assessment activities to understand more about the progress which pupils are making. They are careful to balance praise and encouragement. Teachers often mark work alongside pupils so that points of misunderstanding can be corrected. Written comments for older pupils do not always indicate specifically where improvement is needed. Sometimes planning for individual needs does not make the most effective use of the records which are kept about pupils' achievement. Records are passed to the next teacher at the end of the year to ensure that they have good information about their new class.

The Foundation Stage Profile and the end of Year 2 national standardised tests enable teachers to measure pupil attainment against national expectations. Pupils do very well in these assessments as a result of very good teaching.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils



Provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. Spiritual and cultural development is good. There is a friendly, welcoming atmosphere. Pupils feel happy and enjoy coming to school. Staff are warm and friendly towards them and they respond by trying hard and behaving very well.

The school is run on Christian principles. Spiritual awareness is developed through daily assemblies and RE lessons. Assemblies are planned thoughtfully and based on a range of relevant personal, social and community themes. 'Circle times' for younger pupils provide good opportunities to consider, amongst other things, the circumstances of others less fortunate than themselves. An understanding of pupils' and other's faiths is encouraged through a range of carefully chosen activities. They are introduced effectively to the idea of 'being a Hindu, a Muslim, a Buddhist and a Christian' through a very well planned programme.

Pupils devise their own class rules. These show a high level of moral and social responsibility. The development of their self-awareness and confidence is given a high priority. Older pupils are encouraged to be responsible, for example, in helping to support the younger pupils at break times. Pupils are polite and conduct themselves very well about the school. Staff take every opportunity to promote good manners and politeness. Pupils eat their packed lunch together in an orderly and sociable manner.

Pupils mix well at the school. They show respect for each other and listen when others are speaking. They are encouraged to become independent from an early age with, for example, reception pupils getting themselves ready for swimming, even managing to put on tricky swimming caps. An awareness of community needs is developing through regular collections for charity. After a visit from a charity worker to explain their importance, the school is collecting to fund a 'hearing dog for the deaf'.

The staff provide good opportunities for cultural development. These include visits to places of interest such as castles, museums and galleries. Art and craft activities, informative displays around the school and topics in history, for example, provide further good support for pupils to learn about other cultures. There are many other good opportunities in dance, drama and music, as well as the

occasional visits from travelling theatre companies.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



The school makes good provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety and cares for them very well. There are sensible, detailed policies to promote good behaviour and discipline which are fully implemented and understood by all. Pupils' behaviour is of a high standard and relationships are very positive at all levels. The school environment is one in which pupils feel safe and valued as individuals.

Pupils are very well supervised at all times on the school premises. The headteacher is the named child protection officer and all staff are alert to issues to protect pupils. The school has made good provision for fire safety. These include a detailed fire risk assessment, a satisfactory report from the fire officer, regular testing of all appliances and termly fire drills which are accurately documented. The importance of pupils' welfare, health and safety in the school and on school visits is given a high priority. Although detailed risk assessments are undertaken for every visit, including weekly swimming, these do not take full account of national guidelines.

An appropriate policy for First Aid is implemented effectively with detailed records kept of all accidents. Many staff are trained in First Aid and well-stocked First Aid boxes are located sensibly. The admission and attendance registers are kept according to current regulations and attendance is very good. The school has recently prepared a detailed accessibility plan to show how it will fulfil its duties with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

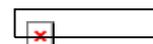
The school meets all of the requirements except one.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- prepare and implement a written policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school which has regard to DfES guidance: 'Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits' (paragraph 3(2)(c)).

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff



There are thorough procedures for checking the suitability of all newly appointed staff which includes their qualifications and employment history. All the necessary checks are made on the adults employed in the school or who visit for teaching purposes.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The school operates on two sites rented from local churches. There is adequate accommodation for the number of pupils on roll. The classrooms on the main site are light and airy. The nursery pupils are in a small classroom but have the use of the large hall. Part of one large classroom has been made into a library area which is also used for daily assemblies. Outside there is a hard-surfaced playground and a very large grassed area, with climbing equipment, which is used extensively for outdoor activities.

On the second site which is attended by most of the nursery pupils, a very large hall provides a good space for a wide variety of role-play and practical activities. A further two classrooms are used for quieter lessons. The outside play area is relatively small but very well organised with a good range of equipment including a small climbing frame and sandpit.

The staff work hard to provide a very good, stimulating learning environment in all the class bases and learning spaces on both sites. Pupils' work is attractively displayed and they share a pride in the appearance of the school. Resources are accessible and stored tidily. This encourages pupils to be more independent in their learning. They look after resources very well and readily clear things away at the end of lessons. Classrooms are kept tidy, clean and in a good state of repair. Furniture is appropriate for the age of the pupils. Staff do what they can to make pupils' surroundings attractive in the rented accommodation.

All parts of the site are fully accessible and thoughtfully managed by the staff to ensure that all areas are used well. For example at playtime, a partially fenced area is provided for the younger pupils on the main site. This affords extra protection from ball games while still allowing older and younger pupils to mix freely promoting the family ethos.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The school produces a very attractive and informative brochure. This contains details about the school's curriculum and all the educational opportunities which it offers. The school's aims and ethos are explained, as well as the way that parents can become involved in their children's education. Inserts are included in the information pack for prospective parents with details of the school staff, fees and the range of policies which are available for them to see. Newsletters with children's work are produced and the school sends some information each term to parents about dates and events.

A good range of information is given to parents about the progress which their children are making. There are parents' evenings in the autumn and spring terms to discuss forthcoming topics for study and report on children's achievements. An annual written report is provided at the end of the summer term. This contains a good range of information about what the children have been learning and how well they have done. Parents are pleased with the amount of information which they

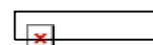
receive and know that they can discuss their children with the school staff at any time. The headteacher is always there to welcome parents and children at the start of the school day and the nursery manager likewise at the other site.

Parents play an active part in supporting their children through homework activities. Several parents help in school, especially with hearing readers. Parent representatives have meetings with the headteacher to discuss issues of school development.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints

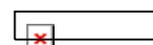


The school has a very detailed and clear complaints procedure which sets out all the correct stages for informal and formal resolution of complaints.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details



Name of school:	Bertrum House School		
DfES ref number:	212/6381		
Type of school:	Pre-preparatory and Nursery		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	2½ - 7 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 26,	Girls 17,	Total 43
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys 37,	Girls 27,	Total 64
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys ,	Girls 1,	Total 1
Annual fees (day pupils):	£825 - £2,537		
Address of school:	290 Balham High Road London SW17 7AL		
E-mail address:	office@bertrumhouseschool.co.uk		
Telephone number:	020 87674051		
Fax number:	020 87674051		
Headteacher:	Ms M Simon		
Proprietor:	Miss L Badenoch		
Lead Inspector:	Mr Peter Way HMI		
Dates of inspection:	29 November - 2 December 2004		

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