

Buckswood School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Israr Khan

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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.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Buckswood School is a co-educational school for day and boarding students aged 10 to 19 years. It offers a range of GCSE, A-level and English language courses and now also teaches the International Baccalaureate Diploma. Having started with 67 students on roll in 1999 it has grown considerably since moving to its current site in the grounds of Broomham Hall, between Hastings and Rye, in 2001. It continues to grow and now admits 412 local and international students for whom it aims to provide a rich and varied curriculum, believing that, 'every child has a talent...' which the school seeks to nurture. Students come from all over the world, with the language and culture of over 50 countries being represented and adding to the international profile of the school. No students have a statement of special educational needs. The last inspection of educational provision was in May 2008 and the residential provision was inspected separately by the Commission for Care Standards Inspectorate in October 2008. This inspection was of education provision only.

Evaluation of the school

Buckswood School provides a good quality of education. It offers an outstanding curriculum through which it successfully meets its primary aims of nurturing individual talent and preparing students for the next stage of their education. Good quality teaching ensures that students make good progress. Students display exemplary attitudes to learning and their behaviour is outstanding. Arrangements for safeguarding are good and meet regulatory requirements. The school has made good progress since its last inspection and meets all but two of the independent school regulations.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding. The curriculum is both flexible and innovative in its approach and is very responsive to the needs of an internationally diverse body of students. A very wide range of extra-curricular and sporting activities is enhanced by an abundance of enrichment options which broaden students'

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

horizons and increase their enjoyment of learning. The curriculum seeks to encourage students to find and nurture their talents in accordance with the overarching aim of the school.

Key Stage 3 students have opportunities to learn a wide range of foreign languages and every international student is given the opportunity to study their first language in greater depth. There is very good provision and support for students whose first language is not English and this enables students to make good or better progress in acquiring English. Students are provided with a strong foundation for studying GCSE courses. Key Stage 4 students are similarly well prepared for the next stage of their education through the provision of a wide choice of subjects to suit a range of abilities. The International Baccalaureate Diploma has recently been introduced in addition to the present range of A-level courses and various English language courses which support access to universities in the United Kingdom. This has broadened further the routes to higher education that are made available to students. The school has improved the curricular provision for information and communication technology (ICT) since the last inspection.

The excellent provision for sport is strengthened further by the high expectations that staff have of their students. A wide range of expertise, some of which is at professional level, ensures that students keep fit and healthy and enjoy their time at school. Staff in the boarding accommodation contribute effectively towards the good personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Appropriate careers guidance is in place for all students.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Provision enables students to make good progress given their original starting points on entry. In the best lessons, students are encouraged to present their ideas to the rest of the group and to comment on each other's work. This reinforces students' subject knowledge and also develops their speaking skills. This was demonstrated particularly well in a media studies lesson in which students were also given a deeper understanding of the world of business. Lessons of similar quality were also seen in music and science where the teachers were able to enthuse students with their clear passion for their subject.

The majority of teaching observed was of good quality. While lesson planning is satisfactory its quality varies, particularly in specifying the level of English language used by teachers. Occasionally, the language used in some classes is too complex for students at the earlier stages of speaking English as an additional language, which lessens the rate of progress. Students arriving late to some lessons also hinder the rate of progress. Resources to support teaching and learning are good and include specialist science facilities, ready access to computers and suitable course texts. Since the last inspection the school has extended the use of ICT. Interactive whiteboards are used well to support teaching and learning in many lessons.

Teachers make good use of the assessment data which the school monitors. This ensures that the level of challenge for students is usually well matched to their prior learning. In this way students' learning builds systematically as they move through the school. Students are aware of what they are learning and they are also clear about what they have to do to achieve their targets and grades. Progress is tracked effectively and intervention strategies are employed if a student gives an indication of underperformance.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Self-reliance, thoughtfulness and consideration for others are important aspects of the school's values that are consistently promoted.

Students have a clear understanding of right and wrong and enjoy excellent relationships with each other and their teachers. High levels of self-esteem and self-worth contribute to their progress and achievements. Students gain a good understanding of the importance of public institutions and services through the subjects taught and enrichment activities.

Students' behaviour is outstanding and their attendance is excellent. They say that they enjoy coming to school and have lots of opportunities to pursue their interests and improve themselves. Students are confident and really enjoy opportunities for self-development and responsibility. Senior students demonstrate leadership by supporting younger students, thus creating a caring, community atmosphere. The school makes considerable efforts to promote respectful treatment of other faiths and cultures. Provision ensures that students live in a tolerant and harmonious community. Students are encouraged to talk about their faith through conducting presentations to local primary schools. They gain a great deal from a very wide range of trips abroad which further develops students' awareness of cultural diversity. For example, the annual trip to Swaziland promises students that, 'you will change your outlook on life... you will return a new person, humbled and appreciate every aspect of your life'.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good. Policies aimed at safeguarding students, and minimising risks, are in place and implemented effectively. All the staff, including the designated persons, have been trained at the appropriate level to fulfil their child protection duties. Detailed checks are made on the suitability of all adults who work with, or have access to students. Risk assessments are suitably carried out for the premises, classroom activities and trips off site. All electrical appliances are tested by a competent person to ensure that they are safe to use. There is a full-time nurse on site and a number of other staff are trained to administer first aid effectively. Fire safety procedures are good and fire drills are carried out regularly.

Students feel safe and are very well supported in their personal development and well-being. The family atmosphere and the pastoral care, guidance and support arrangements are important strengths of the school. Anti-bullying and behaviour policies are clear and guidance is implemented effectively. For example, students say that bullying is not an issue in school but is taken very seriously when identified. Healthy eating and living are very much encouraged and both are an integral part of school life. There are rich opportunities for students to exercise and participate in physical sports activities to keep fit. Healthy living is encouraged further through a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The school complies fully with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

All of the required recruitment and vetting procedures are carried out to ensure that staff and others are suitable to work with students. The single central register contains all of the required information.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The growth of the school has meant continued development of the accommodation and facilities provided. Provision enables students to learn effectively in a secure environment. The school has recently built new boarding provision for sixth form students and a debating chamber was being constructed at the time of the inspection. The school has an efficient system in place for dealing with any difficulties or problems that may arise with the buildings and facilities it provides. While the quality of the furniture is satisfactory, and some new items have been purchased, some furniture requires replacement. The outside lighting around the site is not adequate in winter months and there are also areas on the site where large puddles form near walkways during heavy rain, causing an obstruction. The school has identified these issues and plans have been drawn up by the school's architect to address them.

Provision of information

All of the required information is provided, or made available, to parents, carers and others. The school provides a wealth of clear and up-to-date information for parents and carers through its well-presented and informative website. Parents and carers are given information on their children's progress on a regular basis through electronic means and through a student and parents' handbook. They also have opportunities to talk to the staff about their children's progress during the school year, and can use the website to find information about school life and activities. A relatively small number of parents and carers responded to the Ofsted questionnaire as the school regularly seeks their opinion on how the school is performing. Those that did respond held very positive views of the school.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The complaints policy meets all of the regulations and can be accessed by parents and carers through the school's website.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises of and accommodation at schools (standards in part 5) and must:

- ensure that the drainage system is adequate for the disposal of surface water (paragraph 23(b))
- ensure that the lighting in all parts of the school is satisfactory and has regard to the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 23(o)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Ensure that all students are punctual to lessons.
- Improve lesson planning to ensure it is of consistently good quality.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made.

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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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Secondary		
Date school opened	1999		
Age range of pupils	10–19 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 277	Girls: 135	Total: 412
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of boarders	Boys: 168	Girls: 65	Total: 233
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£10,425		
Annual fees (boarders)	£22,680		
Address of school	Broomham Hall Rye Road Guestling Hastings East Sussex TN35 4LT		
Telephone number	01424 813813		
Email address	tfish@buckswood.co.uk		
Headteacher	T Fish		
Proprietor	G Sutton		

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.



5 December 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Buckswood School, Hastings, TN35 4LT

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed having the opportunity to meet you and your teachers. You told us that you enjoy school and particularly like its family atmosphere. You go to a good school where adults work hard to prepare you well for the future. You make good progress in your subject areas and the provision made for your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. You are served by an excellent curriculum and you have an exceptionally wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities that you benefit from. Your attendance is excellent and I was impressed by the fact that you are very keen to learn and get on with your work independently. This is because your teachers know you as individuals and teach you well. You are exceptionally well behaved and get on really well with each other. We were pleased to note that you have high hopes for the future. In order to make your good school even better, I have suggested that the school might:

- further improve lesson planning so that it is consistently good
- ensure that you all arrive on time for your lessons

In order to meet the independent school regulations, the school needs to improve the drainage of surface water when it rains and increase the amount of lighting between school buildings and around the schools grounds.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Israr Khan
Lead inspector