

Inspection of Benedict House Preparatory School

1–5 Victoria Road, Bexley, Sidcup, Kent DA15 7HD

Inspection dates:

8–10 February 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Early years provision	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and parents warmly describe the family atmosphere at Benedict House. This is because pupils and staff know each other well. In turn, this supports pupils to feel safe and happy. Pupils understand what bullying is and are confident to ask for help if they need to. Adults manage any concerns effectively, meaning pupils are kept safe. Parents and pupils who completed the online survey agreed that school was safe, and bullying was well managed.

Pupils benefit from attending activities that develop their interests in sport, music, art, computing and construction. Pupils enjoy learning different brass, string and woodwind instruments. They also enjoy performing in the school orchestra or rock band.

There are opportunities for pupils to represent their school, such as singing in the choir at the local music festival. Pupils are proud of the responsibilities they hold. For example, school council members have designed and implemented the 'playground charter'. This contributes to pupils' positive behaviour when playing outside.

Pupils work hard and produce work of a good quality. This is because staff are ambitious for pupils to achieve well. The curriculum has been designed to ensure pupils learn important ideas in different subjects. However, guidance for teachers is clearer in some subjects than others.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have acted swiftly to address weaknesses in reading, identified during the previous inspection. In the early years, children enjoy joining in with familiar stories, rhymes, and songs. This prepares them well for when they start to read. Staff have been well trained to teach phonics effectively. They give pupils time to practise reading books that are well matched to the sounds they have learned. Teachers use assessment well to identify pupils who struggle to read. These pupils are helped to catch up well. As a result, pupils enjoy reading and do so with fluency and accuracy.

The overall programme of learning matches the scope and content of the national curriculum. In all subjects, leaders have identified the knowledge pupils should be taught. In most subjects, this has been sequenced so that important ideas are revisited and practised. In turn, this helps pupils apply their understanding to more-complex learning. For example, in mathematics, children in the early years practise counting. This helps them go on to understand multiplication. Older pupils use this knowledge to solve problems involving perimeter, area, and volume.

Similarly, in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, children in the early years talk with confidence about how they feel. They develop the right vocabulary to discuss emotions and listen to others talking about their feelings. This helps older pupils to discuss concepts of mindfulness, self-belief, self-worth, motivation, and resilience.

However, there are subjects where leaders have not considered how important ideas should be broken down into smaller steps. In these instances, teaching is less precise, and pupils do not practise what is important. For example, in geography, pupils struggle to describe the location of the places they study. This is because they have had insufficient opportunities to practise what they have learned about cities, countries, and continents.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are swiftly identified. Staff are well trained to understand the different needs. This helps to adapt learning activities to ensure that these pupils develop the knowledge and understanding they need to access the same curriculum as their peers.

Pupils generally behave well. However, there are isolated times when pupils' behaviour affects the learning of others. Staff do not always address this. Leaders monitor pupils' attendance and punctuality carefully. They follow up on any concerns they have.

Pupils' personal development is well considered. This begins in the early years, where children take turns, and share equipment. The curriculum has been designed to ensure pupils know how to stay physically and emotionally safe. Pupils understand the importance of positive and respectful relationships. They recognise that people are different and that everybody should be treated equally, and with respect.

Since taking responsibility for the school, leaders have gained an accurate understanding of its effectiveness. This has enabled them to identify the right priorities for further development. The experience and expertise of the proprietary and governing boards provide strong support for school leaders to address these priorities. Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards continue to be met.

Staff are proud to work at Benedict House. They feel they are well supported by leaders to carry out their professional roles.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The current premises do not include adapted toilet facilities for pupils or staff with disabilities. This has been identified as a priority in the proprietor's accessibility plan.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils are kept safe by staff who have been well trained to recognise and report any concerns they may have. Leaders seek advice from external agencies to ensure pupils and their families receive the support they need promptly.

The curriculum has been designed to help pupils to understand how to stay safe. For example, pupils learn about road safety, healthy relationships, and staying safe online. Pupils are knowledgeable about reporting risks they might come across when using the internet.

Leaders have ensured they are fully compliant with statutory requirements. Pre-employment checks, the school's admissions register, and risk assessments are effectively managed and maintained.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The curriculum matches the ambition and scope of the national curriculum. In all subjects, leaders have identified the important ideas that pupils need to learn. However, in some subjects, this is not broken down into smaller steps that need to be taught and practised. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum in all subjects is precise. This will support teachers to focus on what pupils need to learn and remember to build their understanding over time.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	101484
DfE registration number	303/6060
Local authority	Bexley
Inspection number	10204275
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	156
Number of part-time pupils	22
Proprietor	Chatsworth Schools
Chair	Anita Gleave
Headteacher	Craig Wardle
Annual fees (day pupils)	Early years – £7,590 Lower school – £7,950 Upper school – £8,430
Telephone number	020 8300 7206
Website	http://www.benedicthouseprepschool.co.uk
Email address	secretary@benedicthouseprepschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–9 November 2017

Information about this school

- Benedict House is a coeducational preparatory school for pupils aged two to 11. It was founded in 1989 and is situated in three Victorian houses in Sidcup, Kent.
- This was the school's third standard inspection. The school was last inspected in 2017 and was judged to be good.
- The school is registered to admit up to 160 pupils aged from two to 11. There are currently 155 pupils on roll. Two pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school became part of the Chatsworth Schools group in January 2019. The current headteacher took up his post in January 2022.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in these subjects: reading; mathematics; geography; and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. To do this, they met with leaders, had discussions with staff, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. Other subjects were considered as part of this inspection.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' priorities for improvement.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, teachers, and teaching assistants.
- Inspectors met with the chief operating officer of the Chatsworth Schools group and three members of the governing body.
- The inspection team reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising records and through discussions with staff and pupils. Inspectors also toured the premises and looked at documentation and policies to check compliance with the independent school standards.
- The views of pupils, parents, and staff, as gathered through discussions and Ofsted's surveys, were considered.

- As part of the inspection, inspectors considered a material change to the school's premises and admissions number. The school is likely to continue to meet the independent school standards if the material change is implemented.

Inspection team

Nick Turvey, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Phil Garnham

Her Majesty's Inspector

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