

Benedict House Preparatory School

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

Inspection dates

7–9 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher provides strong leadership and has brought stability to the school since his appointment in May 2017.
- Leaders ensure that effective safeguarding arrangements are understood and used well by staff. Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe.
- Governors have an incisive knowledge of the school and its community. They have effectively managed the significant turnover of staff and leaders since the time of the previous inspection.
- Leaders ensure that all pupils are fully included in school life and can enjoy a wide range of experiences, which promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Teachers are reflective and work hard to improve their skills. As a result, teaching and learning is good.
- The proprietor and the staff have ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- Pupils make sustained progress from above-average starting points in reading, writing, mathematics and science. By the time they leave the school, they achieve standards that are well above the national average. Pupils are confident, happy learners and they behave well. Leaders deal with rare incidences of bullying effectively.
- Pupils are taught a wide range of subjects across the curriculum. Teachers do not always use technology consistently well to enhance learning in all subjects.
- Leaders recognise the need to build on their partnership working with parents to improve attendance.
- Children in the early years make good progress and teachers track the progress of individuals well. Teachers are less confident in teaching phonics and leaders lack rigour in their monitoring of provision and outcomes in this phase of the school.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that the leaders:
 - monitor the quality of provision in the early years to ensure better teaching of phonics
 - provide appropriate professional development for practitioners to enhance their teaching skills, especially in phonics
 - build on the good work of current leaders to strengthen partnerships with parents in order to improve attendance and raise outcomes further.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - enhancing the use of technology across the curriculum to strengthen learning and progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The proprietor provides effective leadership. He has steered the school well through a period of unstable leadership. He and the governors have ensured that a highly skilled headteacher has been appointed. The school community has been affected by the changes of leadership since the previous inspection. The headteacher has quickly built positive relationships and has established the right priorities to improve the school. He has brought stability and security to staff, parents and pupils, alike. He has ensured that staff feel valued and are proud to work at the school.
- Leaders have ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders have been successful in ensuring that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins learning across the curriculum. Pupils are friendly and respectful to each other and to adults. They show a good understanding of equality issues. Pupils contribute well to the life of the school and its community through the school council and through participation in various charity events. A range of visits and visitors enriches pupils' cultural development. For example, firefighters came to talk to pupils following the Grenfell fire tragedy.
- The headteacher has an accurate picture of teaching across the school. He monitors teaching and gives precise feedback to help teachers to improve their skills. He sets rigorous performance management targets.
- Funding for pupils with education, health and care plans is spent effectively so that pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make sustained progress.
- Leaders track pupils' progress and outcomes across the school well. However, their tracking of children's outcomes in the early years does not reflect the precision or rigour of information in key stages 1 and 2.
- Pupils benefit from a rich curriculum. Themes and topics interest and engage them. Leaders carefully plan themes, which link subjects creatively to bring the curriculum alive. However, opportunities for pupils to use technology to enhance learning in a range of subjects are limited.
- Most parents and pupils are very positive about the work of the school. The headteacher has done much to engage parents who were previously dissatisfied because of the changes to leadership and to the teaching workforce. However, leaders recognise that in order to improve outcomes and attendance further, there is more work to be done to engage all parents positively in the work of the school.

Governance

- Governors provide effective challenge and support to leaders and ensure that the independent school standards are consistently met.
- Governors ensure that the necessary information and guidance is available to parents. They have ensured that the safeguarding policy, which refers to current statutory guidance, is published on the school's website.

- Governors care deeply about parents' views of the school. They rigorously investigate and resolve any complaints they receive. Governors have steered the school through a period of unstable leadership, and have ensured that the school has maintained a good standard of education.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school has a suitable and up-to-date safeguarding policy published on its website. All staff adhere to it.
- Pupils are confident that they are kept safe at school. They demonstrate effective knowledge and skills to keep themselves safe.
- The majority of parents who spoke with inspectors or completed the online survey expressed confidence in the school's work to keep children safe.
- Training is provided to help staff understand safeguarding arrangements. Leaders ensure that all staff complete the relevant online training which is available to them. Staff know and use the school's referral system, when appropriate.
- Leaders work effectively with other professionals to support pupils who may be at particular risk. Staff understand their role in protecting pupils from the risk of radicalisation.
- Appropriate checks ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. Leaders manage recruitment diligently. Robust systems are in place for checking visitors to the school and ensuring that they are supervised on site.
- The school site is secure and safe. Leaders assess and manage risks, both in the school and in the local community. This helps staff to feel confident so that pupils feel safe when they are taken out of school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers work creatively to ensure that pupils make sustained good progress from starting points which are typically above those seen nationally. Positive relationships underpin learning in the classroom. Pupils know that their teachers care about them and want them to do well.
- Teachers work hard to plan lessons which are lively and interesting. Pupils benefit from learning a wide range of topics and themes. High-quality literature is used to stimulate writing activities and pupils are taught to write at length for various purposes and audiences. Teachers place emphasis on developing pupils' handwriting skills and pupils are motivated to get their 'pen licences'. One pupil showed inspectors his improved writing and beamed with pride when he said he knew he was 'close' to getting his licence.
- Teachers ensure that pupils become confident readers who enjoy reading a good range of texts. Pupils in key stage 1 and 2 apply their phonics well to reading, and show a good understanding of the books they read. However, some children in the early years are not confident in articulating the sounds that letters make.
- Teachers plan carefully to match tasks to the different ability groups within their class. Teaching assistants are well deployed to support and guide pupils in their learning.

Teachers ensure that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are included fully in lessons and receive effective support to help them make progress.

- The teaching of mathematics is effective. Teachers ensure that the most able pupils are challenged and achieve well.
- Provision for physical education has recently improved and pupils enjoy a good range of sports during and after the school day. They and the school are proud of their efforts in local competitions.
- Since the previous inspection, each class benefits from sessions in the information and communication technology suite, where they are taught appropriate knowledge and skills with regard to technology. However, teachers do not use technology consistently well during lessons in the other subject areas to enhance the learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident, successful learners. Staff contribute very well to the development of their self-esteem because they care about them and want them to be successful.
- Leaders put equality at the heart of the school's work, ensuring that pupils' views are considered. This contributes to pupils' good understanding of British values. Pupils are polite, respectful, fair and tolerant.
- Teachers make sure that pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe.

Behaviour

- Pupils' behaviour is good. They show positive attitudes to learning in lessons. They work and play happily together. Pupils share resources well in lessons, and share and play sensibly with the range of equipment and resources available at playtimes.
- Pupils who spoke to inspectors were clear that discriminatory behaviour and bullying are rare at school, and are tackled well by teachers and leaders if they do occur. There was no poor behaviour at all observed during the inspection.
- Too many pupils lose learning time through regular short absences or longer holidays away from school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Most pupils are successful in securing a place at the secondary school of their choice and teachers ensure that pupils are ready for this move.
- In the 2017 national assessments for 11-year-olds, pupils at the end of Year 6 achieved standards that were well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils who made good progress across key stage 2 was also higher than the national average.

- Pupils across the school make strong and sustained progress in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Their knowledge and skills in other subjects is developing well.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress because they receive appropriate support in their work. This helps build their confidence and their approach to learning.
- The most able pupils are challenged by tasks which stretch their thinking and help them make strong progress. Lower-attaining pupils make good progress because teachers think carefully about matching learning to their needs, and additional adults are deployed well to support them. There are no disadvantaged pupils at the school.

Early years provision

Good

- The school meets the independent school standards in relation to its early years provision.
- Children achieve well over time in the early years. In 2016, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception was well above average. In 2017, this fell below the national average. However, children made good progress from their starting points and were well prepared for Year 1. These children are currently making good progress and attaining well in their Year 1 classroom.
- Provision in the early years supports the development of all areas of learning. It gives children a wide range of experiences that capture their interest. As a result, children make good progress towards the early learning goals. Teachers and practitioners are highly committed and work hard to make learning fun. Sessions are typically filled with songs and games, which children really enjoy.
- Adults know the children well. They help children to build their confidence in themselves as learners. They are kept safe and happy in the provision.
- Practitioners track the progress of individuals rigorously, and plan provision according to children's next steps in learning. Examples of children's achievements are captured and help teachers to check the children's progress over time. However, leaders do not systematically track or review the attainment and progress of groups or cohorts over time. This means that they do not have a full picture of the impact of the school's work on children's achievement.
- Not all practitioners in the early years are confident in teaching early phonics skills. Leaders recognise that further training is needed in this area.

School details

Unique reference number	101484
DfE registration number	303/6060
Inspection number	10008542

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

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	152
Number of part-time pupils	7
Proprietor	Mr Ali Khan
Chair	Mr Ali Khan
Headteacher	Mr Malcolm Gough
Annual fees (day pupils)	Early years £6,894 Lower school £7,245 Upper school £7,698
Telephone number	020 8300 7206
Website	www.benedicthouseprepschool.co.uk
Email address	secretary@benedicthouseprepschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	29 June 2010

Information about this school

- Benedict House is a coeducational preparatory school for pupils aged 2 to 11. It was founded in 1989 and is situated in three Victorian houses in Sidcup, Kent.
- The school was previously inspected in 2007 and received a light touch progress monitoring inspection in 2010.
- There are currently 152 pupils on roll, 36 of which are in the early years. Seven of these children in the early years attend part time.

- The school has pupils from a range of ethnic groups. The largest groups are White British, Black African and Asian.
- The school is part of the Alpha Schools group.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes and reviewed pupils' work across a range of subjects.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, middle leaders and the proprietor. Discussions took place with several parents, and 91 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were reviewed. Inspectors considered 17 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors heard a sample of pupils read, and discussions took place with pupils about their work and their views of the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation. This included the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, attendance data, behaviour logs and health and safety audits. Inspectors also scrutinised policy documents, including curriculum and assessment information and the school's own progress data. They also considered safeguarding records.
- Inspectors observed pupils' conduct around the school, and at break and lunchtimes.

Inspection team

Ruth Dollner, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Andrew Wright

Her Majesty's Inspector

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