

Belgrave School

10 Upper Belgrave Road, Bristol, BS8 2XH

Inspection dates 22–24 September 2015

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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Students make rapid progress, often from low starting points. As a result of the good progress they make students are well prepared for the next stage of their education or employment.
- Teaching is good, so students quickly gain confidence and enjoy lessons. They have strong relationships with their teachers.
- Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. In particular, it helps students to develop their self-esteem.
- Students value each other and appreciate that there are many faiths, ethnicities and communities; as a result they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Effective leadership is focused on raising standards. Leaders monitor teaching and its impact on learning and achievement. They ensure that all independent school regulations are met.
- The proprietor gives very effective support and challenge.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is not yet outstanding. Teachers and new leaders do not have enough opportunities to learn from, and share, outstanding practice.
- Not all staff involved in the newly-introduced specific dyslexia intervention are equally confident in their teaching, which is not uniformly strong.
- The system for appraisal lacks clarity and a clear annual timetable to cover all staff.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the schedule for the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014, and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of learning so that it is never less than good and that students make outstanding progress by:
 - developing the ability of staff involved in delivering specific dyslexia intervention to ensure that teaching of this is uniformly at least good and that students make quick progress as a result
 - providing staff with more opportunities to see and share outstanding practice.
- Ensure the appraisal system improves the quality of teaching and students' learning by:
 - clarifying the role of self-evaluation plays in the management of teachers' performance
 - ensuring the timings of reviews are agreed and communicated to all staff
 - acting on the broader information gathered and outcomes of reviews to improve teaching further.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since coming into post in January 2015, the headteacher has brought a very clear vision and focus to learning. The school has improved since the last inspection and all staff are proud to work in it. They benefit from opportunities to develop their skills, particularly in supporting dyslexic children. External training and support from the Bristol Dyslexia Centre is developing teachers' skills so they are able to cater effectively for dyslexic children.
- The headteacher and proprietor work together closely to ensure that the independent school regulations are met. They have an accurate picture of the quality of education; self-evaluation and improvement planning is focused on the drive for constant improvement.
- Leaders monitor teaching and learning efficiently. They support teachers to plan and assess effectively, enabling good tracking of progress for every student.
- There are high expectations and students, who often enter with very low self-esteem, are able to learn and make good progress from their individual starting points. This is supported by effective teaching. Teachers responsible for key subject areas show determination to enable students to do their best.
- Standards are rising in English and mathematics, while the wider broad and balanced curriculum provides an effective education. This includes opportunities to reflect on the British values of democracy, tolerance and the rule of law. The curriculum, which is individualised to meet the wide-ranging needs and abilities of students, is reinforced by good opportunities for wider learning. Trips and visits, including an annual camp, provide good opportunities to promote students' social and independence skills.
- Throughout the school there is mutual respect and support, and this strongly promotes equal opportunities and the ending of any discriminatory behaviour. Leaders are aware of the need to protect potentially vulnerable young people from radicalisation and extremism. Policies in this area are detailed and well developed.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Students get strong support in developing greater self-confidence and self-belief. There are good opportunities to develop artistic skills and sometimes, as in the case of the Arts Award, lead to external accreditation.
- Safeguarding is effective and leaders work well with other professionals to support students who might be at risk.
- A system of appraisal is in place and teachers' pay is linked to their performance. While the process is supportive and highlights professional development needs and aspirations, it is not currently well defined. There is a lack of clarity and focus around the process, including how accurately teachers evaluate their own practice.
- Links with parents are strong and the school is in regular contact with them. Often this includes working with parents to ensure collaborative approaches to learning, so that parents can support and sustain learning done during the school day. Parental support is overwhelmingly positive. Many comment on the huge changes for the better they have seen in their children since they joined the school.
- Some students are placed at the school by their local authority, often as a result of parental requests. The local authorities and parents are pleased with the progress being made by students and praise the school for the effectiveness of the links, such as those shown in the organisation of learning reviews.
- The proprietor and school leaders acknowledge that some aspects of the school's website need to be refreshed so that information is easy for parents to find. In addition, they are aware that a more watchful eye needs to be maintained to ensure that the most recent versions of school documentation are uploaded onto it.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The proprietor is in almost daily contact with the school, established as an offshoot of the Bristol Dyslexia Centre, which she started. There is a formal meeting with the headteacher every Monday when all school issues that have arisen during the previous week are shared.
 - This close relationship extends to working alongside staff to develop the curriculum, which meets the needs of students effectively. The proprietor visits classrooms to monitor practice and look at progress.
 - The proprietor is fully trained in safeguarding and, having undertaken the safer recruitment training, is centrally involved in all appointments. The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
 - Working closely with the company accountant, the proprietor ensures that the school operates within its financial means and that funding is used primarily to ensure a good quality of education.
 - The proprietor is responsible for the appraisal and performance management of the headteacher, setting challenging annual objectives while also supporting him to ensure that high standards are kept

throughout the year. She is also aware of the outcomes of the process and the professional development needs of other staff.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **is good**

- Teachers and students form extremely positive relationships. Teachers have high expectations, yet also appreciate the difficulties faced by students as a result of their learning difficulties. They work hard to create an environment in which students quickly gain in confidence so that they re-engage and start to enjoy their learning. Equality of opportunity features in every class.
- Students enjoy learning and lessons are very lively, with everyone focused on learning. Their enjoyment, and the strong relationships they have with staff and with each other, means that behaviour improves and supports rapid progress.
- The strong teamwork in each class between the teacher and the learning support assistants enables each student to be well supported on an individual basis. Information on progress is collected throughout the year so that adults are aware of the current levels at which each student is working. This material includes a range of other information, such as reports from the speech and language or occupational therapists, who provide strong support to students and their teachers as part of the team.
- When students first join the school, a careful assessment of what they can and cannot do is made. This includes an assessment of their emotional state, which enables the school to plan learning from where the student is at that point. The effective use of information is illustrated in the creation of an additional class this year to address the specific needs of a small group of students with complex needs. They had been identified as having stalled in their learning. Although it remains early days, with strong support this group is focused on learning, supported by strong teaching and intensive support from skilled learning support assistants.
- When students first arrive, learning is focused on ways that do not involve a lot of writing because of students' negative attitudes after earlier failures. Many audio and visual challenges soon start to mingle with increasing amounts of written work as students begin to realise that, with the specialist support of staff, they can achieve things that they had previously found extremely difficult.
- The core areas of reading, writing and mathematics are taught effectively. Opportunities are taken to embed them into wider learning once students have overcome their feeling that writing or number work is too difficult for them.
- Students respond well to teachers' questioning and lessons are marked by lively and thoughtful discussions. This also gives teachers an opportunity to assess students' understanding of work and, when necessary, they take a step back and go back over work to try to ensure that it becomes embedded.
- The school has initiated a daily period of specific dyslexia intervention. As this provision has only been in place for two weeks, it is too early to assess the outcomes for students. However, not all staff involved are equally confident in their teaching, which is not uniformly strong.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare **are good**

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote students' personal development and welfare is good.
- Central to the success of the school is the way in which students are supported and encouraged to develop their confidence and self-belief. Students and their parents frequently comment on the ways in which the school has helped improve lives for the better.
- Impartial careers advice is currently provided through support from one of the local authorities which place students at the school. These arrangements meet requirements and since the last inspection no students have dropped out of their college courses.
- Students' attitudes are extremely positive. The way they treat each other, listen to what others are saying and accept the rights of others to hold different but equally valid opinions are strengths. Outside school, students' acceptance of the wide range of ethnicities, faiths and communities reflects positive work to prepare them for life in modern Britain. The use of derogatory or aggressive language is rare and is not tolerated by students themselves or by the school as an institution.
- The promotion of safety through careful risk assessments and health and safety policies helps create a

safe environment. The regulations around fire, first aid and the provision for sick students are all met. Students are encouraged to think about their own personal safety and adopt a positive attitude.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students arrive with challenging behaviour as a reaction to previous failure, but the well-implemented behaviour policy quickly develops much more positive attitudes.
- Throughout the school and at all points of the day, students get on extremely well with one another and with the staff. Adults act as extremely positive role models and the 'can-do' approach that permeates the school encourages positive attitudes.
- The students are adamant that there is no bullying in school. They know about bullying because it is covered in lessons and assemblies. For example, they are well aware of the different types of bullying and know how dangerous it can be to misuse the internet or social networking sites.
- Students greatly enjoy school and, as a result, attendance is good and supports effective learning. There is no persistent absence.
- Exclusion is extremely rare, but when it has been used the school has quickly ensured that multi-agency support is in place so that continuing education and family support are in place. This helps protect such vulnerable young people who could be at risk without such support.

Outcomes for children and learners are good

- From their low starting points when they first join the school, students are very well supported and make good progress in all areas, including the core areas of English and mathematics.
- When students join the school, their ability in reading is generally low compared with their chronological age. A well-taught programme to help students understand letters and the sounds they make supports rapid progress. As they progress through school, students catch up and emerge as readers who can enjoy books for pleasure as well as for learning.
- Information is gathered throughout the year so that staff know the levels at which every student is performing at any one time. This is used to ensure that progress is maximised, so that the progress of Belgrave students is maximised from the minute they arrive. As they re-engage with learning, they make better progress and narrow the gap in attainment between themselves and other students nationally.
- All students are expected to gain external accreditation and the school uses a range of examinations to ensure that all can be challenged at the right level. This includes the use of Foundation Level and GCSE examinations. Sometimes the most able students are entered for GCSE early when they can gain the highest grades. This reinforces students' confidence that they can be successful at a high level, as does the staggering of challenging examinations to reduce the level of stress, which can remain a powerful negative force for a dyslexic student.
- The performance of the most able students shows that they make rapid progress. Over time, students have left the school to follow academic courses prior to moving into higher education and then to successful careers.
- Since students are supported emotionally and socially, as well as in terms of enhancing their attainment, they are well prepared for life after school. Most go on to college courses after Year 11, but some go into apprenticeships or to some form of employment. Students and their parents are firmly of the view that this would never have been possible had they not moved to the school after their initial failures.

School details

Unique reference number	109382
Inspection number	10006130
DfE registration number	801/6019

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	Day special school – specific learning difficulties
School status	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	6–16 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	40
Proprietor	Pat Jones
Headteacher	Jonathan Skinner
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,800–£32,439
Telephone number	0117 974 3133
Website	www.belgrave-school.org
Email address	info@belgrave-school.org
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2012

Information about this school

- Belgrave School is a small independent day special school for up to 40 boys and girls between the ages of six and 16 years who have specific learning difficulties, sometimes with associated difficulties.
- Fourteen of the students have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- No students are disadvantaged in that they are known to qualify for free school meals or are looked after by their local authority.
- The vast majority are of White British origin.
- The school was first registered in 1993 and last inspected in June 2012. Since that time the school has appointed a new headteacher, who took up his post in January 2015.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for any of its students. On occasion, it enters them early for GCSE examinations.
- The school works closely with the Bristol Dyslexia Centre, which is situated next door, and which is also owned by the school's proprietor.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection took place with one day's notice. Five lessons were observed, covering each of the classes in the school. Three were undertaken jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, teachers, the occupational therapist, the speech and language therapist and the proprietor. Telephone conversations were held with representatives of two of the local authorities who place students at the school.
- The views of parents were gathered from the 10 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey, from a meeting with two parents during the inspection, from discussions with parents bringing their children to school at the start of the day and from a telephone conversation.
- The inspector spoke to students, both formally with a representative group and throughout the inspection, so that their views could be taken into full account. Students' work was observed in lessons, and samples of written work over time were looked at to provide evidence of progress. Detailed case studies enabled the inspector to gain a picture of wider provision and support for students.
- The views of staff were gathered from their responses to the staff questionnaire and from discussions throughout the inspection.
- The inspector checked compliance with the independent school regulations. He looked at a range of documentation, including information on the progress of students, planning and assessment, the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, and a range of policies and procedures, including those for safeguarding.

Inspection team

Martyn Groucutt, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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