



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**BELMONT SCHOOL  
INTERIM INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Belmont School

Full Name of School	<b>Belmont School</b>		
DfE Number	<b>936/6175</b>		
EYFS Number	<b>EY346874</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>312077</b>		
Address	<b>Belmont School Feldemore Holmbury St Mary Dorking Surrey RH5 6LQ</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01306 730852</b>		
Fax Number	<b>01306 731220</b>		
Email Address	<b>office@belmont-school.org</b>		
Headmistress	<b>Mrs Helen Skrine</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Nick Butcher</b>		
Age Range	<b>2 to 13</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>141</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (97 boys; 44 girls)</b>		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	<b>6</b>	5-11: <b>75</b>
	3-5 (EYFS):	<b>22</b>	11-18: <b>38</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>135</b>	Capacity for flexi-boarding: <b>44</b>
Number of Boarders	Total:	<b>6</b>	
	Full:	<b>0</b>	Weekly: <b>6</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Kate Ward</b>		
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>		
Inspection dates	<b>22 Mar 2011 to 23 Mar 2011</b>		

## PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule for INTERIM inspections*. The inspection is a two-day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in February 2007.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010\*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

\*These Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31<sup>st</sup> August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

A specific inspection of boarding was not carried out and the report does not contain judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. Any comments on boarding arising from this inspection are in the context of the school as a whole. The existing report on boarding was produced in February 2009 by the Children's Directorate of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) under Children's social care/Boarding school.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit

- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

# CONTENTS

	Page
<b>1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills	2
The quality of the pupils' personal development	3
The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management	4
<b>3 ACTION POINTS</b>	<b>6</b>
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	6
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	6
<b>4 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE</b>	<b>7</b>
(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	7
(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	7
(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	7
(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	8
<b>INSPECTION EVIDENCE</b>	<b>9</b>

## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Founded in London in 1880 and now based in Holmbury St Mary, Belmont School is an educational trust administered by a governing body, offering co-education to children aged two to thirteen years including day, weekly and flexible boarding. The current headmistress has been in post since September 2006. Since the previous inspection, the school has lowered its entry age to two-year-old children who, together with the three-year-olds, are based in self-contained, purpose-built accommodation. Whilst pupils are largely from professional British families, a number have international backgrounds. Pupils come mainly from the area local to the school. The school's primary aim is to produce well-rounded, confident and friendly pupils who are ready to take on the challenges ahead of them, and to make a positive contribution to society.
- 1.2 Belmont School is centred on a fully restored arts-and-crafts mansion set in 65 acres of woodland close to the town of Dorking. Facilities include a sports hall, theatre, playing fields, tennis courts, and a swimming pool.
- 1.1 Within the Belmont School grounds is an independently run school for 51 full-time dyslexic pupils. These pupils join with the Belmont pupils for some lessons, assemblies, games and activities but are not part of this current inspection. At the time of the inspection there were 141 pupils on roll of which 97 were boys and 44 were girls; of these, nineteen boys and nine girls were in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), with six children under the age of three. Assessment for entry is used only to ensure that the school can meet the needs of every pupil. Of the forty-one pupils identified as requiring support with their learning, twenty-three receive specialist help. No pupil has a statement of educational needs and there are six pupils with English as a second language who are fluent in English and able to fully access the curriculum. Overall the ability profile of pupils, as evidenced in the results of nationally standardised tests, is in line with the national average.
- 1.2 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the EYFS and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalents are shown in the following table.

### ***Early Years Foundation Stage Setting***

School	NC name
Little Belmont 2's	Pre-Nursery
Little Belmont 3's	Nursery
Reception	Reception

## 2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

### **The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills**

- 2.1 The pupils' educational experiences enable them to achieve well academically in relation to their abilities, and meet the school's aim of educating pupils at their own level. Literacy standards are excellent. They read confidently, and write fluently, both creatively and factually. Mathematical understanding is of a high quality. Pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developing well and their use in cross-curricular activities is increasingly integrated into the wider curriculum. Overall standards are high. Staff are committed to their school and share the aim to provide value-added education that gives pupils a sense of enjoyment and personal and collective achievement. The school encourages and nurtures pupils' talents outside lessons and through individual and group activities in all the creative arts, sport and academic pursuits; they achieve high levels of success locally and nationally in drama and swimming; for example, the choir won first prize at two local music festivals.
- 2.2 Pupils' attainments cannot be measured in relation to average performance against national tests but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be high in relation to national age-related expectations. The pupils follow a wide curriculum and, on leaving the school, the vast majority achieve places at their first choice senior school many gaining academic or non-academic awards and scholarships. This level of attainment, as judged in lesson observation and pupils' written work, indicates that pupils make excellent progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. Pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) have individual education plans and thoughtful planning ensures that they make rapid progress both in lessons and over periods of time, in line with their peers. Pupils show good attitudes to learning, are articulate and listen well. They persevere well in tasks set and are eager to achieve high levels of success.
- 2.3 The curriculum is broadly based and accessible to all pupils, contributing positively to pupils' development in all areas of learning within the National Curriculum subjects and additionally in religious education (RE), personal, social and health education (PSHE), and French. Curriculum planning is directly informed by the use of assessment data and, in the best practice seen, material for pupils needing support with their learning is seamlessly integrated into classroom planning and teaching. The PSHE programme is effective in developing in pupils an awareness of themselves and the world around them. The extra-curricular activities programme is extensive and diverse and includes a wide range of artistic and creative opportunities such as photography, drama, cookery, outward bound activities and environmental projects as well as sport. Pupils speak very highly of their enjoyment of the programme offered. The school prides itself on encouraging creativity through such initiatives as the biannual 'Belartis' festival, a celebration of creative arts by pupils under the direction of invited specialists in their field.
- 2.4 In the small sample of lessons observed, teaching was excellent overall meeting the needs of pupils well. The best lessons are characterised by varied and effective teaching methods together with good pace and challenge. Open-ended questioning supports and develops learning and allows pupils to develop their own strategies and ideas. Good learning habits are encouraged; the level of challenge is high and the opportunities for independent working and investigations are widely evident

across all year groups. Good resources are used effectively to support teaching and learning. Interactive whiteboards and networked computers now installed in all teaching areas are used well by teachers and have enhanced pupils' access to ICT.

- 2.5 Marking is regular, although the school is aware that, on some occasions, it is variable in quality and not consistent with the marking policy. In the best examples seen in work scrutiny and in lessons, teachers include detailed comments for pupils to help them improve their work.

### **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 2.6 Pupils' personal development is excellent, and a strength of the school. The spiritual, social and moral aspects of the pupils' development are particularly strong and in line with the aims of the school.
- 2.7 Pupils are confident and articulate and have a tremendous sense of pride in their own and others' achievements. They learn to value and respect themselves and others. Their spiritual development is outstanding and nurtured most successfully in the creative arts, lessons and assemblies which offer time for celebration of school and individual success and collective worship. Pupils' moral development is extremely strong and permeates the daily life at school; pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong and know that fairness is important. Behaviour within and outside the classroom is of a consistently high standard. Charity events have raised a considerable sum of money and the pupils have a real understanding that there are many others in the world who are considerably less fortunate.
- 2.8 Pupils demonstrate excellent social awareness and feel that they are a valued part of a caring school. Older pupils show consideration for younger ones. They have a clear understanding about public institutions, social services, the wider community and how they should respond in difficult situations including bullying through the comprehensive PSHE course. They know to whom they can turn for help and advice if they have a problem. The school council offers an important forum for pupils to contribute to the successful development of their school. Pupils' cultural awareness is well developed. They are tolerant, open-minded and keen to engage with and understand cultural differences. They reflect effectively upon world issues and have some understanding of the needs of people in other countries. However, the opportunity to gain further knowledge about cultures and faiths very different from their own remains under-developed.
- 2.9 The quality of the pastoral care and the attention given to the welfare, health and safety of pupils is excellent throughout the school. The pupils have a strong sense of what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour; issues or conflicts rarely occur and bullying in any form is not tolerated. They are confident that, on the rare occasions it does arise, it is dealt with quickly and effectively, and strategies such as the use of a suggestions box enable the pupils to manage their concerns well. Pupils are extremely well supported and cared for by all staff; appropriate medical arrangements are effective, including for those pupils with serious medical conditions. Strong relationships exist between pupils and staff and amongst the pupils themselves. Members of staff know the pupils very well.
- 2.10 Both junior and senior lunchtimes are pleasant, social occasions. With the encouragement of the catering staff and food council, and through the programme of PSHE on healthy eating and regular exercise, the school provides a choice of locally sourced, freshly cooked and balanced nutritious meals, which the pupils really



appreciate. The health and safety committee meets termly, and concerns relating to health and safety are discussed at weekly staff meetings. The school ensures that all reasonable measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards have been taken. Risk assessments are undertaken in all areas of the school, and those for the health and safety of pupils on school trips are comprehensive and secure. Safeguarding policies are robust and the relevant training has been undertaken by all staff. Admission and attendance registers are correctly maintained and stored.

- 2.11 The quality of the boarding experience is excellent and fully supports the aims of the school, making a strong contribution to pupils' achievements and personal development. Boarding accommodation is provided in the main house and new boarders are made welcome with an informative handbook. The school offers occasional boarding alongside the well-established weekly boarding. The pupils relish their boarding experience, enjoying the social aspects and the many opportunities for hobbies and play. They are well looked after; they enjoy excellent relationships, they understand the welfare arrangements and they know whom to approach if they have any concerns.

### **The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management**

- 2.12 Governance is excellent. Governors discharge their statutory responsibilities, and take a full part in the overall strategic and financial planning, educational development and overall management of the school, providing critical support for the headmistress as necessary. Policies and procedures to ensure strong arrangements for pupils' welfare, health and safety are under regular review. Governors are well trained in child protection and safeguarding matters.
- 2.13 Leadership and management are excellent. Through the senior leadership, the curriculum and assessment procedures have been strengthened. All staff members at various levels are well informed and have a good grasp of their roles in management. Their understanding of what is required in terms of monitoring, assessment, planning, peer mentoring and appraisals is very strong. Senior leaders work extremely well together and involve all staff in discussions which lead to overall ownership of decisions reached and policies set. They have a good vision for the future of the school and are working to ensure the best possible provision for its pupils. All recruitment checks have been carried out on staff at the time of their appointment to ensure their suitability to work with children. The accommodation, maintained to a good standard, is clean and well decorated. Space in all areas is used to maximum advantage and every effort has been made to create a wide range of good quality facilities to support pupils in their learning.
- 2.14 Links with parents, carers and guardians are excellent and they make valuable contributions to the pupils' learning and personal development. Provision of the relevant information to parents is helpful, and includes parent handbooks, fortnightly newsletters and access to an informative school website. Reports are of high quality and provide guidance as to how pupils might improve their work. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection. The responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire completed by parents and pupils indicate that they are very satisfied with the school. Pupils are pleased with the quality of education and care provided. Parents were particularly pleased with the teaching, their child's progress and achievement, the range of subjects taught, the worthwhile attitudes and values the school promotes and the ease by which they can communicate with the school. A small minority of parents expressed some concern about the manner in which the school handles their concerns. The inspectors judge that the school's complaints

policy is clear and systems by which concerns are resolved are thorough and well considered.

### **3. ACTION POINTS**

#### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 3.1 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

#### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

- 3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Develop opportunities for pupils to research and engage in activities which will lead to an appreciation of the contribution made by other faiths, traditions and cultures.
  2. In the EYFS, prioritise areas for development, particularly the use of outdoor areas adjoining the Nursery classes.

#### **4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE**

##### **4.(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

4.1 The effectiveness of the Early Years provision is outstanding overall. Excellent teamwork between staff, together with warm relationships with children and their parents, significantly contribute to a secure, happy environment in which children make rapid progress. Effective arrangements are in place to safeguard children and to ensure their individual needs are met. Accident records have been improved since the previous inspection and further areas for development, identified through regular self-evaluation, reflect the setting's strong capacity for continuous improvement.

##### **4.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

4.2 Leadership and management are good, with outstanding aspects. Policies and procedures, including staff checks, are implemented efficiently to safeguard children and ensure that each has an equal chance to succeed. Good quality resources include a wide variety of books which are used very well to develop children's knowledge, understanding and literacy skills. The well-qualified staff work together extremely well to ensure children's seamless transition between EYFS classes and into Year 1. Weekly staff meetings and effective links with external advisors result in future improvement being identified, but these are not yet prioritised in development plans. Close liaison with parents and, when necessary, external agencies ensure that children receive the support they need. Parents are very positive about all aspects of the provision: they appreciate the friendly atmosphere, caring staff and the secure start to their children's education.

##### **4.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

4.3 Overall the quality of provision is outstanding. Much of its success is due to the individual attention staff give children and their excellent relationships with them. They guide children extremely well, promoting good health and safety practices through well-established routines and clear expectations. Children benefit from interesting, varied activities, supported by detailed planning. Staff employ excellent strategies to involve all children and make learning enjoyable. Indoor areas are welcoming and well organised to help children, particularly those under three, settle quickly and become independent learners. Outdoor spaces are generally used well to support children's learning. Those immediately adjoining the Nursery classes are not fully developed or utilised to provide frequent opportunities for outdoor learning. Throughout the EYFS, children's progress is monitored through regular observation and assessment, and resulting information is used well to plan for their differing interests and needs. Risk assessments are regularly carried out to ensure children are in a safe environment.

#### **4.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

- 4.4 Outcomes for children are outstanding. They are likely to achieve or exceed the Early Learning Goals by the end of the EYFS. Children under three thrive in this warm, family atmosphere. They confidently make choices, try things for themselves and take responsibility for small tasks. As children progress through the Nursery, they increase their concentration when they listen to music, experiment with water and compose paintings. Children in the Reception class are keen learners, capable of counting reliably beyond ten and solving simple numerical problems. They learn to read and write, for example, simple sentences about 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. Throughout the EYFS, children develop very good communication skills, an understanding of ICT and appreciation of books. Their physical skills develop well, enhanced by regular swimming lessons. Children's awareness of others, hygiene and safety is apparent through their routines, play, good social skills and behaviour.

#### **Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three**

- 4.5 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.

#### **Complaints since the last inspection**

- 4.6 Since the last inspection, there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required any action to meet national requirements.

**Section 3 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.**

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed a small sample of lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. An inspector visited the boarding house and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Mr Frank Skipwith

Mrs Elaine Brook

Ms Anne Culliford

Reporting Inspector

Former Head, SHMIS school

Early Years Lead Inspector