

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL
(ISC)**

INSPECTION OF

BRONTE HOUSE

By the

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE
(ISI)**

On

12th – 15th March 2007

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Bronte House

The senior school, Woodhouse Grove, was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of the School	Bronte House
DfES Number	383/6113
Registered Charity Number	529205
Address	Apperley Bridge, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD10 0PQ.
Telephone Number	0113 250 2811
Fax Number	0113 250 0666
Email Address	general.enquiries@brontehouse.org.uk
Headmaster	Mr C Hall
Chair of Governors	Mr G Greenwood
Age Range	2 ½ - 11 Years
Gender	Co-educational
Inspection Dates	12th – 15th March 2007

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002, as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills has accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003.

The inspection was not carried out in conjunction with the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Boarding Standards. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education and development in general. The full CSCI report can be found at www.csci.org.uk.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Bronte House is the junior school of Woodhouse Grove, a Methodist day and boarding school, and caters for pupils from 2½ to 11 years. Originally founded in 1934 as a day and preparatory school for boys, it became co-educational in 1985. In 1999, Ashdown Lodge, the purpose built pre-prep school within the grounds of the junior school, merged with Bronte House to become its early years' department. With Woodhouse Grove, the school describes itself as 'one school with three parts thus providing the opportunity for continuity of learning from the formative years of nursery to the threshold of university and career.'
- 1.2 The school's aims and values are deeply rooted in the Christian foundation of the school as a whole, whereby, 'pupils are encouraged to be honest, caring and conscientious and, ultimately, to decide for themselves, with guidance from the school, a moral code by which to live.'
- 1.3 The school is situated in a semi-rural campus, set in spacious grounds with attractive gardens for safe play. It is a quarter of a mile away from Woodhouse Grove, and pupils are able to use the specialist facilities there. .
- 1.4 At the time of inspection there were 280 full time pupils (173 boys and 107 girls) and 45 part time pupils (27 boys and 18 girls). Below Year 3, admission to the school is non-selective. This allows a fairly wide ability range, although the results of standardised tests show that most of the children are of average or above average ability and results in national tests could be expected to be above the national average. Few children belong to ethnic minority groups. There is only one child for whom English is not the first language spoken at home. No pupils have a statement of special educational need, but 58 have been identified by the school as requiring some special educational provision. Seven children board in the junior boarding house at Woodhouse Grove.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The educational experience provided by Ashdown Lodge and Bronte House is outstanding. The high qualities of educational experiences offered by the school are well suited to the needs, aptitudes and abilities of all pupils. Firm foundations provided through the curriculum, and the outstanding programme of activities, prepare pupils extremely well for the next stage of their learning. The development of the premises since the last inspection has significantly enhanced the educational provision at the school.
- 2.2 The wide-ranging curriculum stimulates pupils and successfully meets their needs. It underpins the school aim of providing continuity of learning, and the encouraged values of honest, caring and conscientious behaviour are clearly present. The considerable range of achievements in many areas demonstrates the importance the school places upon the pupils' acquisition and use of core skills across the curriculum, notably in science, music and sport. The outstanding musical standards, allied to the quality of art work and speech and drama, are clear evidence of how well the school nurtures pupils' aesthetic and creative skills. Pupils are able to experience playing the trumpet, clarinet and violin as part of the music curriculum before deciding whether they want to take individual instrumental lessons. The European studies programme, in which pupils have a 'taster' of French, German and Spanish over three years, also allows pupils to acquire new knowledge and develop their skills.
- 2.3 The quality of the activities programme is outstanding and encourages pupils to participate, concentrate hard and respond to physical and intellectual challenge.
- 2.4 Pupils' enthusiasm for the activities that are provided is evident in the enjoyment they experience and the animated way they talk about their chosen activities. The scope and quality of these activities greatly enriches the life of the pupils.
- 2.5 Throughout the school pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, enabling the school to meet its aim of continuity of provision. Pupils in Year 6 move on confidently to the next stage of their education, normally to Woodhouse Grove. Parents spoke most positively about this continuity of education. The clear curricular frameworks for each year are complemented by excellent planning, which clearly states what is to be taught.
- 2.6 The school meets the curricular requirements of the full range of ability, including the needs of pupils requiring support with their learning and those who are more able. In this, the generous numbers of teaching assistants play a vital role.
- 2.7 The careful academic preparation and nurturing of personal development throughout the school from the nursery upwards results in happy, friendly children who are ready for the smooth transition through the school.
- 2.8 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.9 The pupils are good learners and achieve well in all areas of the curriculum. They almost universally want to succeed and take their studies seriously.
- 2.10 Skill levels are good in relation to age and ability, and the pupils use their ability to make progress in all areas. In Year 1 literacy lessons, good oral and written skills were observed, and the tennis ability shown in a Year 4 physical education (PE) lesson was outstanding.
- 2.11 The attainment of all pupils is good, and the help available from the generous number of teaching assistants ensures that all pupils who require extra help are able to achieve well in relation to their ability. This was evident in many lessons, particularly in literacy and English in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 to 2, and in English and mathematics in the later years. Results of national tests at age 11 are good in relation to pupils' abilities. They are well above the national norms and pupils consistently score very highly in science. This level of achievement underlines the very good quality of teaching and pupils' application to learning, and reflects the excellence observed in many other areas.
- 2.12 Music is a strength of the school, and a number of rehearsals were observed during the inspection. Many excellent results were achieved in the recent Harrogate Speech and Drama festival, and boys include a nationally ranked ballroom dancer.
- 2.13 There is all-round excellence in sport. Recent successes, such as gaining second place in the national schools' rugby tournament and being winners of the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference (north east schools) under-11 cross country event, are merely two examples of the school's quality of performance.
- 2.14 Throughout the school, the pupils learn well and develop highly effective study skills. Regularly pupils were observed displaying good oral skills, and outstanding reasoning skills, following scientific investigations, seen in both Years 5 and 6. The children in the Foundation Stage were consistently articulate.
- 2.15 Nursery pupils could work confidently on numbers up to 10, whilst the ability to apply mathematics and mathematical concepts was regularly observed in all areas of the school, not least in science experiments in Years 1 and 4 and Year 5 graph work.
- 2.16 Information and communications technology (ICT) is well used within the wider curriculum. Foundation Stage children were observed using a programmable roamer, Year 3 pupils had produced a word processed project about animals, and examples were seen of the use of ICT by junior pupils in science experiments, history and English. This regular use of ICT thoroughly enhances the curriculum.
- 2.17 Pupils reason and argue well, with some very good oral work observed in English and science lessons in Year 6. Year 4 pupils displayed some deep thinking and good reasoning in religious education (RE).
- 2.18 The attitudes to study and work, both individually and co-operatively, are outstanding. The pupils are all very keen to do well and lessons were marked by pupils' hard work and concentration. They work with enthusiasm and purpose and this allows them to achieve highly in all subjects.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.19 Throughout the school, the pupils demonstrate outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. The ethos of the school, together with the quality of relationships in its harmonious community, makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. It is supported by a clear and detailed programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) throughout the school.
- 2.20 Pupils' good and carefully nurtured spiritual development is attributable to worship through assemblies, the programme of RE, PSHE and the wonderfully uplifting music in assemblies and by the choir. Pupils show increasing self-confidence as they move through the school. This is evident from the youngest pupils in the nursery to those who join the school at a later stage. Teachers build on self-esteem and knowledge by valuing pupils as individuals and through the support they provide.
- 2.21 Pupils have a strong moral sense and distinguish clearly between right and wrong from an early age. They find the school rules fair and good. Behaviour is exemplary, pupils display a caring, kind and respectful attitude to one another and both teachers and pupils show courtesy inside the classroom and out of it.
- 2.22 The pupils' social development is excellent. A range of opportunities encourages pupils to relate to one another. The school encourages pupils to be caring, responsible citizens who consider the needs of others.
- 2.23 Pupils' effective cultural development is promoted through an interesting range of activities, visits and studies. Participation in music and drama events, together with visits to various dramatic and musical productions, broadens and deepens pupils' cultural knowledge of the arts. The high standard of displays and performance in music and art demonstrate pupils' knowledge of a wide range of artistic and musical styles from Britain and around the world. A good range of opportunities within many curriculum areas assists pupils to appreciate their own cultural traditions and the diversity of others. This is strongly supported by the school's European language programme. Pupils are very aware of the need for tolerance, understanding and fairness. They respect their own and other cultures and beliefs.
- 2.24 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.25 The quality of teaching, including assessment, is good with many examples of outstanding teaching. It has a positive effect on pupils' learning. The school has implemented the recommendations from the last inspection: the more able pupils are well catered for; assessment in the foundation subjects has been improved; and assessment data is used for planning.
- 2.26 Teaching enables pupils of all abilities to acquire knowledge and make progress. Those pupils who have been identified by the school as needing support for their learning are well assisted by the very competent classroom assistants and by the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO), in small group lessons. The more able are identified and given suitable tasks to ensure that they continue to make progress.
- 2.27 Teaching encourages pupils to think, to be creative and to learn for themselves. It inspires effort. The contemporary dance and rock group demonstrated great enthusiasm for their work and a Year 6 class produced some interesting multi-media presentations.

- 2.28 Teaching is well planned. In the best lessons, learning objectives are clear and pupils are involved in a variety of activities, such as discussions, theory and practical work. In a Year 4 RE lesson, there was lively discussion after which pupils participated in a Seder meal when learning about the Jewish festival of Passover, which was followed by time for reflection and a writing task.
- 2.29 Teachers know their pupils well and have a good understanding of their aptitudes, needs and prior attainments. In the nursery, each child has a key worker who has an overall view of the child's progress. Pupil profiles, started in the nursery are passed to the Year 1 teacher with whom there is good liaison.
- 2.30 Most teachers have real enthusiasm for their subjects, are very committed and have good subject knowledge. Resources are plentiful and are used well to support teaching. Particularly well-resourced areas are the Foundation Stage classrooms and the music department.
- 2.31 The good teaching encourages pupils to behave responsibly. Good behaviour is always praised and rewarded.
- 2.32 Teaching includes regular and thorough evaluation of pupils' work in the Foundation Stage. In maths, English and science in Years 1 to 6, recognised tests are used effectively to measure pupils' ability and progress against national norms. Assessment procedures are used from Year 3 for setting in mathematics and in Year 6 they are used to place pupils in appropriate classes in the senior school. Assessment in other curricular areas is effective.
- 2.33 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils

- 3.1 The school provides a high quality of care for all pupils and gives close attention to their welfare, health and safety.
- 3.2 Class teachers provide high quality pastoral care for pupils. Support and guidance are extremely effective throughout the school. Teachers are clear about their responsibilities in relation to individuals and there are clear channels of support for pupils to deal with problems, should they arise. Parents and pupils are extremely positive about the quality of pastoral provision.
- 3.3 Staff share information about any problems and staff meetings provide an opportunity for teachers to discuss pupils who might give cause for concern. Records are kept of any parental concerns.
- 3.4 Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent. Caring attitudes are fostered within and across year groups. Teachers provide a high level of care and pupils are relaxed and very happy, well disciplined and well behaved. It is an extremely harmonious school with a very friendly atmosphere.
- 3.5 Rewards, such as house points, are avidly sought and pupils are rewarded both for their effort and for significant achievements, including demonstrating good manners. A straightforward anti-bullying policy is in place, but pupils do not feel that bullying is an issue and that if there is a minor incident it is quickly and effectively dealt with by the teachers. The disciplinary focus emphasises positive behaviour, self-discipline and responsibility. Suitable sanctions are in place for any poor behaviour. Pupils are happy to go to teachers to ask for extra help and are confident they will be listened to.
- 3.6 Structures exist to enable parents to discuss academic or social matters relating to their children. If there are any concerns, parents feel that they are listened to seriously and that appropriate action is taken.
- 3.7 Child protection policies are in place and are effective. The chaplain is the designated child protection officer and all staff are aware of the relevant procedures.
- 3.8 Well-designed and effective systems of risk management and assessment support the desire to ensure the safety of those using the school site and going away on trips. No health and safety issues are apparent. Obligations regarding fire prevention are fulfilled. There is an active first aid policy and many staff are qualified first aiders. All accidents are properly recorded in the accident book in the school office. Pupils in the boarding house are well supported by Woodhouse Grove staff and the school nurse, and have access to a qualified medical practitioner, if necessary. The school makes appropriate provision for pupils who are ill and medication is properly stored and dispersed. Attendance and admissions are correctly recorded.
- 3.9 Health and hygiene measures are conscientiously applied in the kitchens. Food provided for pupils is of a high quality and is nutritious and varied. The catering arrangements make a significant contribution to the health and well-being of the pupils.
- 3.10 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.11 The quality of links with parents and the community is outstanding. Parents are very positive about the quality of the education and the pastoral care provided for their children. Ninety-five per cent of respondents to the parental questionnaire, issued in advance of the inspection, indicated strong support for the school's academic and pastoral performance. Parents are particularly happy that the school promotes worthwhile values and are very appreciative of opportunities offered in the wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- 3.12 Parents have good opportunities to be involved in activities in the school and in the work and progress of their children. The parents association, Ashdown Bronte Association, is very active with most functions organised for families, such as family quiz nights, treasure hunts, and summer and Christmas fairs. These events add social cement to the work of the school and are enjoyed by parents, children and members of staff alike.
- 3.13 Parents are provided with considerable information about the school. Newsletters are sent regularly from the headmaster and news and photographs about Bronte House and Ashdown Lodge are included in the lively printed 'News from the Grove' publications. The website is continually being developed with plans being made to provide more information about forthcoming events. There are parents' handbooks for Ashdown Lodge and Bronte House.
- 3.14 Parents are well informed about their children's work and progress. Parents' evenings are arranged every term and effort and attainment grades are awarded every half term in Years 3 to 6, with full detailed reports at the end of the academic year. These contain information about the work covered and the progress made, as well as setting future individual targets to enable pupils to continue to improve their work.
- 3.15 The school's arrangements for handling parents' concerns and any complaints are comprehensive and parents describe how approachable they find the headmaster and all members of staff. Informal contact between staff and parents is on a regular basis with very good relationships being evident. Any concerns are dealt with promptly and sensitively.
- 3.16 Links with the wider community are outstanding. Visitors come into school in connection with various projects and pupils have many opportunities to take part in competitive events in the local area and beyond, often with considerable success. Recent examples include rugby tournaments, cross country running events, music festivals and workshops in theatre. These contribute to the school's relationships with the community and make a valuable contribution to the pupils' personal development. Educational visits take place out of school on a regular basis, for example to the Eureka children's museum in Halifax and to the Yorkshire Sculpture Park.
- 3.17 Pupils also work hard to raise money for both local and national charities. Recently, £4,000 was raised for the National Children's Home by a variety of activities, many of which were initiated by the pupils.
- 3.18 A holiday club is staffed by Ashdown Lodge personnel throughout the year for Ashdown pupils and those in Year 1. Bronte House also hosts a holiday club, which is open to pupils from a wide range of schools and caters for Year 2 pupils upwards.
- 3.19 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

The Quality of Boarding Education

- 3.20 The quality of boarding for the seven Bronte House pupils accommodated in the junior boarding house at Woodhouse Grove is outstanding. Relationships within the house and the range of activities for the boarders are outstanding. Pupils expressed a high level of satisfaction with all aspects of boarding.
- 3.21 Bronte House pupils are well integrated into the boarding house. Relationships between the junior boarders and between staff and boarders are friendly and positive. Standards of behaviour are high and there is a clear expectation that pupils treat each other with kindness and respect. All boarding staff are committed to promoting this caring environment. They know their pupils well and are accessible. The chaplain, who has responsibility for oversight of all boarders, and the nurse, provide an additional layer of pastoral care which pupils value. House staff are very knowledgeable about child protection issues. Communication between the boarding house and Bronte House is effective. Senior pupils are encouraged to take responsibility and help with the younger ones and some listen to Bronte House boarders reading.
- 3.22 A rich programme of evening activities is complemented by a comprehensive list of visits on Sundays, including opportunities for pupils of various faiths to attend places of worship. Often these are arranged in response to pupil suggestions. Bronte House boarders commented on how much they enjoyed the evening activities, such as swimming, and the trips they take part in on Sundays. Boarders have an appropriate amount of free time. Internet access is available in the house and a wide range of facilities is available at weekends.
- 3.23 Systems and resources for caring for the boarders when they are ill are good, as is the standard of accommodation. Pupils share rooms, with two or three to a room. Furnishings and decoration are comfortable and bright.
- 3.24 All recommendations of the last inspection by CSCI have been fully implemented.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 Strong and highly effective governance ensures that a good quality of education is offered to pupils at every stage, in line with the school's aims.
- 4.2 The range of expertise on the governing body, together with the structure of its sub-committees, ensures that they maintain good oversight of performance in all areas of the school. Minutes of governors' meetings and sub-committee meetings indicate that governors have an excellent knowledge of the school, its aims, and its future development needs. In this they are well supported by the Methodist Board, which gives financial assistance and advice, as well as general monitoring.
- 4.3 Governors are aware of their responsibilities and have a clear recognition of their strategic role. They are deeply committed to the school and its development, and contribute to educational and boarding issues through discussion of proposals put forward by the headmaster and other members of staff. The successful completion of building developments, that have taken place since the last inspection, indicates that there has been sound financial planning. Governors have a thorough awareness of their legal responsibilities, for example, for health and safety and for child protection, which are discussed at appropriate intervals at meetings.
- 4.4 Governors are routinely provided with good quality educational, pastoral and management information by the headmaster. They receive a termly report which is a comprehensive account of the school's activities and achievements, and this is used to help inform future planning. Relationships between governors and staff within the school are greatly enhanced by the imaginative Governors' Week, when each governor spends a day in school observing activities in a particular area. These have included diverse aspects of school life and enhance the governors' understanding of how the school operates.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.5 Leadership and management are successful and fully support the school's aims, particularly by providing a happy, secure environment in which the individual is respected, enjoyment and enthusiasm are fostered, and pupils are aware of the needs of others. In response to the last inspection, management roles have been reviewed throughout the school and the management team has been strengthened by the addition of the key stage 2 (Years 3 to 6) co-ordinator, which enhances the strategic planning. In addition, procedures for checking on the quality of teaching and learning have been implemented, although the school is aware that these need further development. The headmaster provides effective leadership, and this is reflected in the outstanding quality of education and care of the pupils. The members of the junior school management team, consisting of the deputy head and Key Stage 2 co-ordinator, support the headmaster well. Together they offer complementary skills to ensure the school's aims are met.
- 4.6 Appropriate policies have been drawn up. They cover all aspects of school life and the school regularly reviews and checks them. All staff are fully involved in the pastoral care of pupils. Effective academic policies have been prepared by subject co-ordinators in all subjects, and the quality of their planning is good. However their role is gradually evolving and is not yet as effective as it might be. Currently, the monitoring of teaching and learning

through lesson observation is not undertaken by subject co-ordinators in their own subjects, so it is difficult for them to have a fully secure view of areas for development.

- 4.7 The teaching staff are highly committed, loyal and hard working and make an enormous contribution to pupils' achievements and progress. These efforts are enhanced by the large number of classroom assistants who make a significant contribution to the learning experience of the pupils and the life of the school. Induction procedures for staff new to the profession support them very effectively.
- 4.8 Arrangements for the day-to-day management of the school work very well. The administrative and other support staff across the school provide high quality assistance, upon which the efficiency of the running of the school depends. Communication within the school, and between junior and senior school, is very effective, and communications with parents and the community are strong.
- 4.9 The school is a very pleasant and welcoming place, and it provides a very secure environment for the pupils. The school's grounds are immaculately maintained. The good quality, bright displays create an effective learning environment. Pupils say they are really happy and are very proud of their school.
- 4.10 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.11 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 The school has many strong features and is outstanding in several important areas. The school achieves its aims and meets the needs of its pupils effectively. Pupils are exceptionally well cared for and their personal development is excellent. A broad curriculum is provided with opportunities for all pupils to learn and achieve well. The extra-curricular programme is outstanding. Teaching is generally good, and often outstanding. The pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary and relationships between all in the school community are very strong. The leadership of the headmaster is effective and he is well supported by his senior management team. Both parents and pupils are very positive about the educational experiences provided. The roles of the subject co-ordinators are not yet fully developed.
- 5.2 The school has made good progress in all aspects of its provision, and in most areas identified for improvement at the time of the last inspection: bringing Years 1 to 2 and Years 3 to 6 closer together; enabling regular meetings for the whole staff; developing stronger links with Woodhouse Grove, to ensure good progression when pupils move from one part of the school to another.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 To maintain and improve upon its effective practice the school should:
1. further develop the roles of the subject co-ordinators to include lesson observations in their monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning in their own subjects.
- 5.5 No action in respect of regulatory requirements is required.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 12th to 15th March 2007. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the sanatorium. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mrs Karin Kelly	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Valerie Goode	Former Headmistress, IAPS school
Mrs Ruth Miller	Former Headmistress, IAPS school
Mr Oliver Price	Headmaster, ISA school
Mr Geoffrey Thompson	Headmaster, IAPS school