

# Downsend School Ashtead Lodge

Independent school light-touch inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Raminder Arora

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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## **Purpose and scope of the inspection**

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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.<sup>1, 2</sup>

This was a light touch inspection which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils; and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

## **Information about the school**

Downsend School Ashted Lodge is one of three pre-preparatory Lodges attached to Downsend School. It was founded in 1983 and operates from a converted residential property in Ashted, in Surrey. A maximum of 50 children may attend at any one time. There are 66 children on roll, aged between two and six years, of whom 40 are part time. There are 34 children who receive government Nursery funding. The school currently supports a number of children with special educational needs, although there are no children with a statement of special educational needs. Two children speak English as an additional language.

There is an 'Early Bird' facility for all children from 8am to 8.30am and an Extended Day facility from 4pm to 5.30pm. Reception and Year 1 children are offered after-school clubs. The school promotes its Quality Charter to produce 'Happy, Hardworking, Successful' children. The school was last inspected in November 2007 and the Early Years provision was last inspected in April 2006.

## **Evaluation of the school**

Downsend School Ashted Lodge provides an outstanding quality of education for its pupils and is very successful in meeting its aims. It has maintained its high quality provision since the last inspection and meets all the regulations for independent schools. An outstanding curriculum, the positive attitudes of pupils and outstanding teaching overall ensure that pupils make outstanding progress in key skills and in their personal development. By the time they leave in Year 1, pupils have achieved high standards and have developed into confident young people, showing outstanding behaviour. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school. The school meets all the requirements for safeguarding

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

pupils and the overall provision for their welfare, health and safety is outstanding. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding.

## **Quality of education**

The school has well maintained its outstanding quality of education since the last inspection. The overall quality of the curriculum is outstanding, from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards. It is extremely well planned with a very good balance of academic and creative studies. Additionally, all children are taught French, and Reception and Year 1 pupils attend swimming lessons. There is a strong emphasis on the acquisition of basic skills. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make an excellent start with their language and literacy, especially reading, and this continues in Year 1. The school has introduced a phonics programme which is having a positive impact on developing pupils' early literacy skills by teaching them the sounds that letters make. Art, music and drama make a significant contribution to pupils' learning, enabling them to successfully develop not only creative skills but also their personal attributes such as self-confidence. Pupils reach high levels of attainment particularly in reading and writing by the end of Year 1. Examples of work show that pupils write meaningfully with growing skill at spelling their own words; a Year 1 pupil's detailed account of a recent visit to Hampton Court, shared in the assembly, was evidence of this. Aspects of personal, social and health education are taught well through science and are discussed in assemblies. Children are well prepared for the demands of Year 2.

Pupils' good progress in art, and in information and communication technology, is evident in displays all around the school. The school has identified a number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils, including those new to English, receive high quality support and show outstanding progress.

The curriculum is enriched with plenty of opportunities for outings and visitors to school. Pupils visit the National Gallery, Hampton Court, or go pumpkin picking to a farm. There is a rich and varied programme of extra-curricular activities, clubs and weekend events. The school's Early Birds provision and after-school clubs are well attended.

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding overall. Teachers are very well prepared and have extremely good subject knowledge. Teaching is outstanding in the Early Years Foundation Stage, enabling children to make excellent initial strides in learning. Although limited by space outside, teachers make good use of the facilities available to extend pupils' learning using outdoor experiences. In most lessons, tasks are engaging and purposeful, and the whole lesson is used productively with a good balance of talk by teachers and activities by pupils. Strong relationships in lessons lead to pupils having very positive attitudes to their learning. In the best lessons, teachers' questioning is a strength that enables pupils to develop their learning even more. Regular standardised tests in reading provide good on-going information about the attainment of pupils. Lessons use a wide range of

purposeful tasks that provide challenge and greater levels of independence. Learning targets are carefully set for individual pupils and based on the very clear and timely assessments. The school has established a sound system for tracking pupils' progress each year and has also prioritised the need to strengthen it further across the school for a clearer overview of pupils' progress over time.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, strong relationships contribute to children's excellent personal development. Levels of attendance are high and the vast majority of pupils say that they enjoy school. The school is a very welcoming community. Staff are very positive role models and pupils get on very well with each other. Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils' spiritual development is successfully promoted in assemblies and through the curriculum. Cultural diversity within the school is celebrated and some pupils were seen actively involved in sharing their experiences, for example the festival of Eid. Racial harmony is strongly promoted through parents and carers, invited to talk to children about different traditions. During the inspection, preparations were being made to celebrate Christmas and Year 1 pupils were rehearsing carols to sing to parents and carers. The orderly nature of the school reveals pupils' very good understanding of the expectations made of them regarding moral and social behaviour. Pupils' social skills, their ability to cooperate, and their high achievements in the key skills of reading, writing and mathematics very effectively support their readiness for the next stage of education. Pupils have excellent awareness of their roles as school councillors. They successfully contribute to the life of the school by taking on jobs and responsibilities. The older pupils enjoy the simple tasks given as helpers to the younger children at playtime. Pupils enjoy the wholesome school lunches. In the wider community, they support a number of local and national charities. Pupils make visits to outside groups, for example entertaining residents at local nursing homes. They learn well about British institutions through visitors to school, for example from the local fire brigade and the police.

## **Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety**

Policies and procedures for pupils' safeguarding, welfare, health and safety, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, are outstanding. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and all requirements are met. Pupils, parents and carers are very sure about the school's safe environment. Highly effective recruitment procedures ensure that all the required checks are carried out on staff to determine their suitability to work with children and the central record covers all compulsory and recommended entries. Staff understand their responsibilities and receive regular and appropriate training in child protection. Pupils settle in quickly and receive exceptional care. The school has improved the care for pupils who have medical needs. Its facilities for pupils who are sick now meet requirements as a result of building an additional room and equipping it. The Early Years Foundation Stage staff

have appropriate first aid training for this age group. Pupils develop excellent understanding of how to be healthy because they are trained from an early age on hygiene routines and provided with healthy lunches and snacks. Staff eat with the children to encourage good eating habits. Children enjoy a range of physical activities, including swimming lessons at Downsends' main site and visits to the local park. The school fulfils its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

The overall effectiveness of the setting is outstanding and provision for under-3s meets the requirements of the Early Years Register. Children enter with skills and capabilities in line with those expected for their age, with strengths in personal, social and emotional development. By the time they leave, most children exceed the early learning goals expected for their age. Outstanding leadership and management ensure outstanding outcomes for all children through continuous self-evaluation to improve the provision, which is also outstanding. The curriculum provides a wide range of experiences which very effectively promote the six areas of learning, enhanced very well by the range of resources, use of off-site facilities and educational visits. Staff make observations of children and plan engaging activities. Children's enjoyment is reflected in their exemplary behaviour and very positive attitudes to learning. Their best achievement is in reading and writing, due to the very effective teaching of letter sounds. Staff extend children's knowledge and skills through a good balance of adult-directed activities and those they choose independently. The outdoor learning area is limited in space but well set up as an outdoor classroom. It is also timed for use by older pupils. There are plans to ensure better access to its 'free-flow' use by children.

Staff promote children's welfare extremely well in close partnerships with parents. Consequently, children feel safe and secure and can approach a member of staff for help. Personal hygiene and sensible diet are promoted strongly. Parents appreciate regular formal and informal opportunities to speak with staff. They report a high level of satisfaction, particularly regarding the commitment of staff and the excellence of leadership in providing for individual children's needs.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

## **What the school could do to improve further**

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- strengthen tracking of pupils' progress for a better overview of their progress over time
- ensure better access to 'free-flow' use of the outdoor area by children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## Inspection judgements

Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
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### The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs	✓			
How well pupils make progress in their learning	✓			

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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### The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	✓			
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	✓			
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	✓			
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	✓			

## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Pre-Preparatory		
<b>Date school opened</b>	1983		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–6		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 14	Girls: 12	Total: 26
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 26	Girls: 14	Total: 40
<b>Number of children aged 0–3 in registered childcare provision</b>	Boys: 12	Girls: 5	Total: 17
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£8,535		
<b>Annual fees (childcare)</b>	£7,425		
<b>Address of school</b>	22 Oakfield Road, Ashtead, Surrey KT21 2RE		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01372 385439/01372 385417		
<b>Email address</b>	ashteadlodge@downsend.co.uk		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs K Barrett		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Cognita Group of Schools		