

Sycamore Hall Preparatory School

Independent school progress monitoring inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Sheila Boyle

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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 inspection was conducted at the request of the Registration Authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan following the previous inspection.

Information about the school

Sycamore Hall Preparatory School, situated in Balby, to the west of Doncaster, was established in 1978 and was last inspected in June 2007. The school is registered for up to 45 pupils between the ages of three and eleven. There are currently 20 pupils at the school; most are of White British heritage with around a third from other ethnic groups. A small proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities; one pupil has a statement of special educational needs and is funded by a local authority. Pupils are organised into three classes: infant, junior and senior. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is made for three children between the ages of four and five in the infant class.

The school aims to 'give each pupil an all round education, developing each individual's potential by encouraging traditional values to develop a positive attitude towards academic work, concentration, self-discipline and a sense of achievement.'

Context of the inspection

The school was last inspected in March 2010. At that time it failed to meet a number of regulations relating to the welfare, health and safety of pupils, the suitability of staff, and in relation to the Early Year Foundation Stage requirements. An action plan submitted in May 2010 contained insufficient evidence to enable judgements to be made on the progress towards meeting the regulations. This is the first monitoring visit undertaken to evaluate the progress made in implementing the action plan.

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan.

At the time of the last inspection in March 2010 the school's arrangements for the welfare and safeguarding of pupils were found to be inadequate. The inspection found that the school's procedures for safeguarding children were not being implemented effectively because staff, including the designated person, had not had the required up-to-date training for child protection. To address this issue the school arranged a programme of suitable training for its entire staff in the summer term of 2010 and this was followed by specific training for the designated person in October 2010. The requirement is now met.

Inspectors also found that the school did not have in place a policy on fire prevention, up-to-date risk assessment for the building, nor had training on fire safety been provided for any member of staff. To address this issue the school arranged for two members of staff to undertake training on fire safety and fire marshalling in June 2010. It drew up a fire safety policy and also risk assessment procedures for the building for the start of the autumn term 2010. The requirement is now met.

The March 2010 inspection found that the identified member of staff responsible for first aid had not had the required refresher training. To address this issue the school arranged for two members of staff to attend up to date first aid training in the summer term 2010. This has been completed so that requirements are met.

The inspection found that some checks on the suitability of proprietors and staff had not been completed. Medical checks had not been obtained for staff prior to the confirmation of their appointments, criminal record bureau (CRB) checks had not been obtained for some staff and information from checks on some staff was not included in the single central register of staff checks. To address these omissions, the school obtained medical checks on all of the staff. CRB checks have been obtained for all staff and information from checks on staff are now included on the single central register. Revised recruitment procedures indicate that in future the required checks will be made prior to the confirmation of appointments. The requirements are now met.

With regard to the welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the inspection found that no-one held a relevant paediatric first aid certificate. To address this issues the school arranged for a member of staff working in the Early Years Foundation Stage class to undertake relevant paediatric first aid training in the summer term 2010. As a result, the requirement is now met.

The inspection also found weaknesses in the educational provision for the youngest children. These included limited opportunities for self-chosen activities through indoor and outdoor play, inadequate arrangements for assessing children and weaknesses in planning for their individual needs and development. The infant classroom has been reorganised to create an area with resources for the younger children to play. Resources include a play house which can be adapted for different functions. The outdoor play area also has additional resources including a play house and small mobile toys such as bicycles and scooters. Additional resources are being purchased with funds raised by the 'Friends of Sycamore Hall'. New planning procedures have been introduced based on the six areas from the practice guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils now have experience in the six required areas of learning for children of that age. Time has been set aside for the youngest children to play outdoors. They now have opportunities for self-chosen activities in the indoor and outdoor environment. New assessment arrangements are in place and children's progress in the six areas of learning is now being assessed and

recorded. Information from this assessment is now being used to set relevant and challenging activities for individual children.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school has made good progress and now meets all regulatory requirements.

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Primary		
Date school opened	September 1978		
Age range of pupils	3-11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 14	Girls: 6	Total: 20
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,752		
Address of school	1 Hall Flat Lane Balby Doncaster South Yorkshire DN4 8PT		
Telephone number	01302 856800		
Email address	sycamorehall@tiscali.co.uk		
Headteacher	Miss J Spencer		
Proprietor	Miss J Spencer		