

The White House Preparatory School & Woodentops Kindergarten

Independent school light-touch inspection report

DfE registration number	208/6384
Unique Reference Number (URN)	100651
Inspection number	364214
Inspection dates	17 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Andrew Redpath HMI

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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.^{1, 2}

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

The White House Preparatory School and Woodentops Kindergarten is an independent primary school for boys and girls aged between three and 11. It occupies a Grade II listed Victorian villa in a residential area in the London Borough of Lambeth. Currently 108 pupils are on roll, including 30 children who attend the nursery part time. Forty-five children are in the Early Years Foundation Stage, 37 of whom have their places funded under the nursery grant scheme. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage and a few speak English as an additional language. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs, although a small number, have medical needs and associated learning difficulties. The school was established in 1985 by the current proprietors. It was last inspected by Ofsted in February 2008 and the Early Years Foundation Stage was inspected by Ofsted's Children's Directorate in May 2008.

The school seeks to provide a caring environment where pupils are encouraged to 'enjoy their schooling and achieve to the best of their individual potential'.

Evaluation of the school

The White House Preparatory School and Woodentops Kindergarten is very successful in meeting its aims and provides an outstanding quality of education. Pupils make outstanding progress due to the stimulating effects of the outstanding curriculum and the good teaching and the very high standard of care in the outstanding provision for their welfare, health and safety. Pupils enjoy their education very much and their behaviour and personal development are outstanding. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is also outstanding and ensures that children make an excellent start to their education. The school has made significant improvements since the last inspection, particularly in the use of assessment information and in the provision for information and communication

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

technology (ICT). Its safeguarding arrangements are good and it meets all the regulations for independent schools. Parents hold overwhelmingly positive views about the school. In the words of one, 'This is a fabulous school where children are treated with great respect and expected to work hard.' A very small number would appreciate more frequent communication about their child's progress, an issue of which the school is aware and seeking to improve.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum throughout the school is outstanding. It provides a very broad range of subjects, which includes the National Curriculum and additional courses in drama, French and Latin. The systematic teaching of numeracy and literacy skills is given a high profile and in their final year, pupils are prepared for entry examinations to local grammar and independent schools. Appropriate citizenship and personal, social and health education (PSHE) programmes include topics on rights and responsibilities, current affairs and forming positive relationships. The small size of classes, generally of around 13 pupils, ensures pupils receive considerable individual help. Appropriate planning for all subjects and a two-year cycle of topics ensure that there is suitable progression in learning for pupils in Years 5 and 6, who are taught together for most of the week. Specialist classrooms and equipment enhance the provision for ICT and music, although the building lacks a hall suitable for physical education or large gatherings. Excellent use is made of community facilities, for example to provide sports, swimming and drama productions. An imaginative programme of educational trips and visits, which includes Kew Gardens, the theatre, concerts and various museums in London, is used very effectively to enhance the curriculum. The curriculum is enriched by an extremely popular and broad range of after-school clubs and activities, which include chess, karate, ICT, fashion (making clothes), Spanish, art, swimming and various sports.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good in all areas of the school. Teachers have high expectations and lessons move at a brisk pace, which creates a purposeful climate for learning. Lessons are generally well planned and contain interesting activities, which capture pupils' interest. An example of this was seen when pupils were engaged in a science experiment to test the permeability of different types of rock. Teachers use praise and encouragement effectively to help pupils try their best. Questioning is used well to check pupils' understanding, although pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop their own ideas and to explain them to the rest of the class. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are given extra help and are included well in lessons. The good subject knowledge of teachers is strengthened through the employment of part-time specialists, for example to take charge of sport and to provide music lessons. The school also works closely with the local authority to ensure that newly qualified teachers receive appropriate support. Resources to support teaching and learning are satisfactory. The school has recently established a computer room which is used well to develop pupils' ICT skills. Further planning is needed to link pupils' ICT skills to support learning in subjects across the curriculum.

The use of marking ranges from satisfactory to good, although occasionally suggestions for pupils to improve their work are not followed up. A good system has been established to assess pupils' learning using tests linked to National Curriculum levels. This information is not yet analysed to provide a detailed picture of pupils' progress as they move up through the school. Pupils leave the school having made outstanding progress and several gain entry to grammar and highly regarded independent secondary schools. They also develop into well-rounded, confident and sociable young people.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards. The school is particularly successful in raising pupils' self-esteem by encouraging them to experience success, both in lessons and in extra-curricular activities. Pupils particularly recognise how the sporting activities, including a residential trip to an outdoor pursuits centre, help to develop their self-confidence. In the words of one pupil, 'I think that the sport is outstanding; it's changed my life.' Pupils' achievements and effort are rewarded through the awarding of 'good behaviour badges', 'magic letters' home to inform parents of successes, and house points.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding. Pupils attend well, display extremely positive attitudes to learning and work hard in lessons. They can distinguish between right and wrong and know how their behaviour affects others. Older pupils display a very high level of social skills and relate to each other in a very mature way. This was observed in an English lesson, when pupils were able to comment on each other's work and accept readily suggestions for improvement made by their peers. Pupils' highly developed interpersonal skills, their high attainment in literacy and numeracy and their competence in using ICT prepare them very well for future employment.

Pupils make a full contribution to the school and wider community. House captains choose team members for competitions; older pupils act as 'mediators' in the playground, resolving any disputes; monitors look after equipment, and each year pupils raise considerable sums for various charities. Pupils gain a very good understanding of public institutions and services through studying relevant topics in citizenship, which include the role of government, how laws are made and the work of the media. These topics are supported through trips and visits, for example to the House of Commons. Pupils have a good understanding of different religious and cultural traditions, which is taught through the religious education curriculum and supported by visits to places of worship. Recent visits have been made to a local church, Sikh Temple and Southwark Cathedral.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Provision for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety across the school is outstanding. A very caring ethos is at the heart of the school's work. Staff treat pupils with respect and have a very good understanding of each pupil's individual needs. Pupils report that they feel safe and that there is an absence of any bullying. In the words of one pupil, 'There is a really warm, friendly atmosphere in this school.'

Pupils have a very good understanding of how to lead a safe and healthy lifestyle. They take regular exercise through participating in the many sporting activities and swimming. Pupils are also encouraged to walk, cycle or use scooters to travel to school, and many do. The PSHE programme has a strong focus on healthy eating and on maintaining positive relationships.

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are good. Clear policies are in place and staff have received recent training. Thorough procedures are in place for the recruitment and appointment of staff. All staff have been subject to clearance at an enhanced level with the Criminal Records Bureau to ensure that they are suitable to work with children, and a single register is held to record checks that have taken place. Detailed health and safety policies cover all aspects of the school's work and there are suitable arrangements for those pupils who have additional medical needs. Fire drills are held regularly and a specialist company checks fire-fighting equipment. In responses to the parental questionnaire, a concern was raised regarding supervision in the playground. Inspectors found that the playground was supervised well, although space is at a premium so that staff always have to be vigilant to see that areas are reserved for different activities to ensure safe play.

The school has a plan for increasing access to the site, which meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the setting and children's outcomes are outstanding. Children settle well and are very happy in the stimulating environment. Behaviour and relationships are extremely positive at all levels. Children are very successful in meeting the early learning goals. They gain a very secure foundation in communication, language and literacy and have a particularly good knowledge and understanding of the world. Children develop a very good understanding of healthy living through eating healthy food and taking plenty of physical exercise. Additionally, Reception children receive swimming lessons.

Provision is good. Classrooms and the outdoor area are extremely well resourced. The Kindergarten staff are very creative in using existing space to allow a good mix

of indoor and outdoor learning, although children's free movement between activities is constrained by the location of some classrooms. An extremely varied and stimulating range of visits enriches children's experience, for example to the theatre, the London Aquarium, a zoo and parks. Excellent records of children's progress are supported by high-quality observations and photographs. Occasionally, assessment information is not used to ensure that activities take close account of children's individual level of learning.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Significant improvements have been made since the last inspection, particularly in extending opportunities for children to initiate their own learning. All the required policies and risk assessments are in place to promote children's safeguarding, welfare, health and safety, and children are cared for exceptionally well. Very close cooperation with parents is established, particularly through sharing information at the start of the school day.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets all 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:

School

- provide pupils with more opportunities to develop and explain their own ideas in lessons
- further develop the use of assessment information to track pupils' progress as they move up through the school.

Early Years Foundation Stage

- use assessment information consistently to ensure that all activities take close account of children's individual levels of learning.

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

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Primary		
Date school opened	1985		
Age range of pupils	3–11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 38	Girls: 40	Total: 78
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 16	Girls: 14	Total: 30
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£10,920		
Address of school	24 Thornton Road London SW12 0LF		
Telephone number	020 8674 9514		
Email address	office@whitehouseschool.com		
Headteacher	Ms Elizabeth Davies		
Proprietor	Mr Stephen McCahery and Mrs Mary McCahery		