

New Forest Small School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Sue Frater 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}

Information about the school

The New Forest Small School is an independent day school for boys and girls aged three to 16 years. Currently, there are 32 pupils on roll, including five children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. None of the children receives Government funding. No pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. None of the pupils has a statement of special educational needs. The school was founded in 1994 as a Montessori pre-school. It aims to tailor its curriculum 'to suit the specific needs of each individual child, ensuring that no child is ever academically left behind or socially excluded'. In addition, the school offers flexi-schooling, designed to support those parents and carers who also home-educate their children. The school is a member of Human Scale Education and has links with Education Otherwise, a home-schooling organisation. This is its first inspection.

Evaluation of the school

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. The satisfactory curriculum and quality of teaching and assessment promote satisfactory progress for the majority of pupils, and good progress for those in the kindergarten and the few pupils taking GCSE examinations. Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and behaviour are a result of the school meeting its aims to nurture the whole child. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. While not all the regulations for safeguarding children were met at the time of the inspection, the inspectors are satisfied that appropriate action was taken by the end of the inspection and that the provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is now satisfactory. The school fails to meet a number of the regulations for registration.

Quality of education

The satisfactory curriculum is supported by a comprehensive policy and schemes of work for most subjects. It is broad and balanced in the kindergarten, which covers ages three to seven years, and in the primary class, which covers ages eight to 13 years. It is still developing in the secondary class, which covers ages 14 to 16 years.

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

The kindergarten curriculum is based appropriately on play and experiential learning. It focuses on developing academic and personal skills. Schemes of work for the kindergarten are based on Montessori, Steiner, humanist and Scandinavian educational philosophies. They also have regard to the early learning goals which are covered through a Montessori approach. For example, sounds and letter shapes in communication, language and literacy are taught through sandpaper letters. Phonograms are taught at the same time. Curriculum time is shared between guided free choice, individual and group lessons. In the primary class, the curriculum consists of art, design and technology, drama, English language, English literature, geography, history, cultural studies, life studies, mathematics, music and science. Pupils take physical exercise in the park each day, but there is no further provision or scheme of work for physical education.

The curriculum in the secondary class covers English language, English literature, mathematics, triple science, geography, modern history, psychology and religious education/philosophy. Design and technology is not taught. Pupils in Year 10 have taken GCSEs in English and mathematics a year early and the very few pupils in Year 11 have taken seven GCSEs. This is the first secondary-age cohort in the school. Examinations are taken at the local secondary school. Pupils in the secondary class work on their laptop computers. However, as information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education are not taught in discrete lessons in the school, there are no schemes of work for these subjects. Careers guidance is provided by a trained careers adviser. Pupils enjoy theatre visits and performing in the school choir and drama productions. They say there are insufficient opportunities for sport, and inspectors endorse this view. Suitable provision is made for personal, social and health education (PSHE) for all age groups. It covers topics such as keeping healthy and sex and relationships education to prepare pupils well for the responsibilities of adult life.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory overall and good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The core subjects are taught by full-time staff, with the exception of mathematics and science in the secondary class. The school uses a range of part-time subject specialist teachers, particularly for GCSE courses. Strengths in teaching include positive relationships, topics that interest and engage pupils, and questions that encourage pupils to think independently. The most effective lessons are planned with clear learning objectives and a sequence of suitable tasks that lead pupils from their previous learning to the new learning objectives. They include opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning skills such as investigating or problem solving. However, not all lessons are planned adequately to make effective use of time. Pupils say they enjoy lessons that engage them in group discussion, science investigations and role play. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are given effective support to enable them to progress as well as their peers.

Pupils are assessed in a range of subjects each half term using tests devised by the school using its own criteria. These assessments are used well in individual tutorials

to inform pupils how to improve their work. However, they are not used to inform lessons to meet the very wide range of ages and abilities in classes. The same tasks are set for all pupils. This limits progress, which is satisfactory overall. Children get off to a good start in the kindergarten, where teachers' observations inform activities to meet the needs of each unique child. The small minority of pupils in the secondary class also make good progress because of the specialist teaching and the use of GCSE criteria to help them to know how to improve their work. Other than in the Early Years Foundation Stage, there is no cumulative written record of pupils' progress to indicate how well they are achieving.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development contributes to their good behaviour, positive attitudes to learning and regular attendance. Pupils say that they enjoy their education very much. One boy stated that he has 'learnt more in this school in a year and a half than in his time in state school'. He found the fast pace of his previous secondary school difficult. Pupils feel staff listen to their views. A particular strength is the way that the school nurtures pupils' self-esteem through valuing each individual pupil. As a result, pupils grow into confident, articulate young people.

Pupils prepare suitably for the next stage of their education and employment. They develop good social and literacy skills, although their numeracy skills are less well developed. Older pupils work on their own laptop computers in lessons, but their ICT skills are not developed systematically. The school has a strong commitment to promoting good relationships between people. Consequently, pupils work and play together well and their behaviour is good. While older pupils support younger pupils within the school community, for example, in hearing the children reading, their contribution to the local community is limited. Pupils learn appropriately about public institutions and services such as the law, Parliament and democratic processes.

Through studying world religions in philosophy, they learn to appreciate and respect different faiths and cultures, such as Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Humanism. Pupils also engage in debates about moral issues, such as whether it is ever right to start a war.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is satisfactory overall. While the school has not been vigilant in ensuring child protection training is up to date for all staff, suitable arrangements were in place by the end of the inspection. The child protection policy meets requirements. The behaviour policy is implemented effectively and a suitable record of sanctions is maintained. Procedures to prevent bullying are effective. Pupils appreciate the fact that there is very little bullying in this small school. Due regard is given to pupils' health and safety in lessons and around the school. Procedures for the administration of medicines are appropriate. Suitable

risk assessments are carried out with regard to the premises, the daily walk to the park and school trips. A fire safety inspection records that fire safety arrangements are suitable. The first aid policy is implemented appropriately. Staff are deployed to ensure the proper supervision of pupils at all times. With the exception of wheelchair access, suitable arrangements are already in place to fulfil the school's accessibility plan. For example, appropriate adaptations are made for pupils with hearing and visual impairment. Attendance and admission registers are maintained adequately. A suitable key person is responsible for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and staff ratios are good.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

A single central register records all appropriate checks on staff and recruitment processes meet the requirements for safeguarding pupils.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The proprietors are aware that the premises are unsuitable. They have purchased more suitable accommodation and have been granted planning permission. The school intends to move into the new premises early in the autumn term. The current accommodation includes a church hall consisting of one large room and the local football clubhouse consisting of one meeting room adequate for ten pupils only. The space limits the curriculum as there are no specialist facilities, for example for ICT and physical education. Both premises have limited grounds for outdoor recreation, but pupils are taken to the nearby park for physical exercise at the end of lunch each day. They are supervised appropriately. Security issues have been raised with the school. In both buildings there are separate washrooms for boys and girls, each with a single toilet and wash basin. There is no separate washroom for staff or visitors, although the arrangements ensure that there is no safeguarding risk for pupils. In neither building are there appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill.

Provision of information

Parents and carers are provided with the required information, but not annual written reports on their children's progress and achievement. Information about the school and availability of documentation is easily accessible on the school's attractive website. Parents and carers can request copies of policies, which are available at the school. Partnerships with parents and carers are effective, as confirmed by the overwhelmingly positive response to the questionnaires returned by ten parents and carers. Typical written comments include, 'It is a very special school. I think you will find that a lot of the children here have tried other more conventional schools and have not been able to cope in them. It has been the making of my son.' Parents and carers praise the way the school re-builds their children's trust in teachers and their confidence so that they feel they can achieve.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The complaints policy is made available to parents and carers and it meets requirements. There were no formal complaints in the last year.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Outcomes are good. The children enjoy school and achieve well. By five years of age their achievements are securely in line with the expectations in the early learning goals. This represents good progress from their starting points, which are below expectations for their age. Good progress is due to the well-developed links between the early learning goals and the Montessori principle of 'help me to do this by myself', and the reference to Scandinavian practice. Children know how to keep safe and healthy as they run, jump, explore and take risks within the safe environment. They know what foods are good for them in their lunch box, and drink the available water. They learn to play together well and to respect other children. Skills for their future development are enhanced by lessons in communication, language and literacy, problem solving and developing social skills, but ICT skills are not developed.

The quality of provision is good. Teachers make good use of observations and assessment to plan activities to meet the needs of the individual child. Good use is made of a suitable range of resources for teacher-directed and child-initiated activities. This includes resources in the outdoor space, although the space is not accessible during wet weather. Suitable attention is given to pupils' welfare, health and safety. This promotes children's confidence and good behaviour. Good leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensure requirements are met. Self-evaluation identifies appropriate priorities for development.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the quality of education provided (standards in part 1) and must:

- prepare schemes of work for ICT, physical education and secondary design and technology (paragraph 2(1))
- provide pupils with sufficient experience in the technological and physical areas of learning (paragraph 2(2)(a))

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made

- use information from assessments to plan teaching so that lessons match more closely the needs of all pupils, particularly in classes which contain a wide range of ages and abilities (paragraph 3(g)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

- ensure all staff attend training in child protection regularly with regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 7).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises of and accommodation at schools (standards in part 5) and must:

- ensure adequate security arrangements for the grounds and buildings (paragraph 23(d))
- ensure there are sufficient and suitable separate washrooms for staff and visitors and for pupils with special educational needs and disability, which take account of regulations 3 and 4 of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 23(j))
- provide appropriate facilities for children who are ill, in accordance with regulation 5 of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 23(k)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- provide parents and carers with an annual written report of the progress and attainment of each registered child in the main subject areas taught, except where a parent has agreed otherwise (paragraph 24(1)(f)).

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	Secondary, primary and nursery		
Date school opened	September 1999		
Age range of pupils	3–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 8	Girls: 7	Total: 15
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 11	Girls: 6	Total: 17
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)	£4,950		
Address of school	St Michael and All Angels Parish Hall Forest Gardens Lyndhurst Hampshire SO43 7AD		
Telephone number	0772 072 2100		
Email address	newforestschool@live.com		
Headteacher	Mr Nicholas Alp		
Proprietor	Mr Nicholas & Mrs Alison Alp		