

Leicester Preparatory School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Joanne Harvey 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

Leicester Preparatory School is a co-educational, non selective and non-denominational independent day school which was first established in 1886. It is located in the south of the city of Leicester and was previously called Stoneygate College. It is privately owned by proprietors who took over the school in April 2009. The present headmaster was appointed in September 2010. The school changed its name to Leicester Preparatory School in September 2011. It is administered by an Advisory Board comprised of three directors, parents, various consultants and two headteachers. The school admits girls and boys from aged three to 11 years.

The school aims 'to offer an education combining traditional values with the best of today's teaching practices, to develop a love of learning and achieve academic excellence within an environment where every child feels valued and fulfilled'.

The school is registered for 150 pupils and there are currently 53 full-time pupils and 10 part-time pupils on roll. Fifteen pupils are funded through the government scheme for nursery education. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the kindergarten and reception classes. There is one class for each year group from Year 1 to Year 6. These classes are taught separately for English and mathematics but often join together for other subjects. Pupils with a disability or special educational need, including one with a statement of special educational need receive additional support in classes. The school was last inspected in March 2009.

Evaluation of the school

Leicester Preparatory School provides a good quality of education for its pupils and meets its aims well. It has made some improvements since its previous inspection and meets most independent school regulations. Pupils clearly enjoy their education, make good progress and reach high standards in English and mathematics because of the good curriculum, effective teaching and thorough assessment. Behaviour across the school is good, exceptionally so in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Lower Prep and pupils leave the school as confident, articulate, well-rounded young people. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and, though some regulations regarding the premises are not met, provision for pupils'

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. Parents say they value the care provided and the attention given to promoting pupils' well-being and enjoyment of school.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. It has breadth and variety and secures the enjoyment and interest of pupils well. The curriculum is supported by schemes of work which ensure the progression of pupils' knowledge and skills. There is a strong commitment to, and understanding of, the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements where children are offered rich experiences across all six areas of learning. Many hands-on and explorative experiences to engage and stimulate children continue through Lower Prep. Delivery in the wider school is often underpinned by the use of purchased curriculum schemes of work. English and mathematical skills are developed to high levels by the time pupils leave the school. Subjects are beginning to be linked together for study through meaningful topic themes in the Upper Prep but this approach is in the early stages of development and its success is only beginning to be evaluated. Special events promote skills well. For example, a science workshop involved pupils working together to improve their subject knowledge and to ensure they were able to collaborate to carry out investigations. Curriculum resources have been much improved, for example, the upgrading of computers and the range of books available.

There are opportunities for pupils to contribute and take on wider responsibility. For example, pupils took part in the Leicester Arts Festival and the choir were highly commended. Partnerships with other schools include a scheme to 'plant a tree, save the earth'. Opportunities to explore the world of work include a Victorian Apprentice Day when the show's contestants mentored pupils through the business enterprise process. Several parents come to talk to younger pupils about their professions. A reading culture is well promoted through daily reading sessions and has improved further as a result of the new library. Children are rigorously taught the sounds that letters make from the start. Later, weekly spelling tests help to ensure that pupils can spell and use complex words correctly. They are well motivated by rewards they receive, for example, in Year 1 they enthusiastically gather new words to add to their repertoire. Speaking and listening skills are encouraged well, for example, through the house poetry competition, and class assemblies which develop their confidence to speak in front of an audience. Assemblies are a showcase for drama, as are larger productions at Christmas and the end of year. Pupils who take exams in music and the dramatic arts get good results. The importance of learning additional languages is stressed and there are two language specialist teachers in school. Children begin French in the kindergarten and later add German, Spanish and Latin. They enjoy music lessons twice a week. Homework is usually regularly and diligently done and is often relevant to what is being studied in class.

A wide ranging sports curriculum has traditionally been promoted and includes hockey, netball, rugby, rounders, swimming, cross country and cricket. There are regular fixtures with other independent schools. Local sports facilities are used,

though occasionally too much learning time is lost to organisation and travel. A good range of after-school clubs are well attended. They include, athletics, scrabble, Latin, cookery, Tae-Kwon Do and Drama at different times of the year. To ensure a broader range of enrichment opportunities, pupils are split into house groups to access a carousel of enrichment activities one afternoon a week. These include cookery, animation, newspaper club and an outdoor club. Pupils say they are invaluable for the development of additional skills. School trips, to Norfolk and to France for example, add considerably to curriculum enrichment and the development of maturity. The curriculum values the various cultural backgrounds of pupils and their families and this contributes well to pupils' understanding of life in a multi-faith multi-cultural Britain.

Teaching and assessment are good and result in all pupils making good progress. However, there is some variation in teaching with some being particularly strong and a proportion satisfactory so that progress varies over time. Subject knowledge is strong. Relationships are positive and trusting. Because teachers know their pupils well and class sizes are small, they can focus on pupils' individual needs, providing tasks that are in the main, matched to ability. Occasionally, pupils of all abilities carry out the same task and consequently, the most able are not challenged to reach their full potential. Because of good management in this area, pupils with a disability or special educational need are supported to do well. This work is underpinned by rigorous tracking of progress, however, such systems are still being developed to monitor the progress that all pupils make as they move across the school. In the younger years, teachers promote independence and good learning behaviour extremely well so that pupils' behaviour is exemplary. This is not the case across the whole school as occasionally there are inconsistencies in expectations and the way that pupils' behaviour is promoted. As a result, a very few pupils do not listen carefully or respond swiftly to teachers instructions so that learning slows. In the best lessons, teachers were seen to be actively engaged with learners of all abilities, using well-directed questions to check understanding, address misconceptions and challenge pupils further. On occasion, in Upper Prep, teachers are over reliant on workbooks and pupils do not get enough time to apply their learning or to reflect and explain their thinking. Their application of basic skills in other subjects is sometimes not of the same high quality as that seen in mathematics and English and presentation slips. Marking to help pupils improve their work is often very effective. Occasionally it too often congratulates pupils without telling them what to do to improve or pupils do not get the opportunity to address development points given.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Providing high quality personal, social and health education is central to the school's ethos. It begins on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage where pupils quickly learn respect and how to get on well together. It is built on highly successfully throughout lower prep and, for the majority, throughout upper school. Pupils have a strong sense of right, wrong and fairness. Their manners to visitors for example, are

exemplary. They are proud to become school councillors, house and sports captains and to raise money for those less fortunate. Pupils are given opportunities to discuss a range of issues, for example, how they can help to sustain the environment, such as through the 'Humming Bird Campaign'. They also talk about the importance of positive relationships and good behaviour. However, there remain a very few older pupils who find it difficult to listen, concentrate and to get on well together. Some inconsistencies in teachers' management of behaviour have allowed this to persist.

Pupils develop a good understanding of the institutions of the United Kingdom through classroom discussion and curriculum study. They study the cultures and faiths of others and discuss them knowledgeably. They advocate healthy eating and exercise. Older pupils are prepared well for transition to senior school. For example, regular practice for entry examinations and joint activities with a variety of schools help them make well informed choices. All pupils pass the common entry examination and gain entry to the first school of choice. Consequently none has any worries about the future and indeed they say the skills they are taught at school prepare them well for their lives in the future.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is satisfactory. Pupils are well supervised in school. A new policy and procedure is in place for the supervision of pupils and their transportation between venues on the school mini bus though its implementation has yet to be monitored. Arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils, including staff training and risk assessments, meet requirements as does the policy for child protection.

The school has the required policies and practices that minimise risks to pupils' health and safety. Though there are failed regulations in premises and accommodation, these relate solely to the toilets used by the youngest children. Suitable temporary arrangements have been put in place to ensure that provision for welfare, health and safety are satisfactory. Healthy lifestyles are encouraged and nutritious and healthy lunches offered. Staff have the required training and attend to first aid and medical needs conscientiously. Practices in relation to fire safety and checking the safety of the premises are satisfactory. Arrangements to promote good behaviour are generally effective and result in a calm environment for learning.

The school has not prepared a suitable accessibility plan for disabled pupils and, therefore, does not fully comply with its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

All adults have been subject to the necessary checks to confirm their suitability to work with children. These are recorded on a single central register as required.

Premises and accommodation at the school

School staff do all they can to maximise the use of the space available in the Victorian building. Improvements have been made to classroom environments and resources. A good deal has been done to address the recommendations from the previous inspection with regard to the quality and suitability of toilet and washroom facilities. As a result, there remains only one area which fails to meet some recommendations. The work has not yet been completed for the toilets used by the youngest pupils and the failed regulations all relate to this area. Good use is made of local facilities for physical education and other curriculum activities. The outdoor area for the Early Years Foundation Stage has been improved and the entrance and steps have been enhanced with clearly defined markings and additional lighting to help the visually impaired.

Provision of information

The good range of information provided to parents and carers by the prospectus and school website is clear, accurate and now up to date. The school operates an open-door policy and there are two formal opportunities each year for parents and carers to consult with their children's teachers and receive information about their child's progress.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The procedures for handling complaints meet all requirements.

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 premises of and accommodation at schools (standards in part 5) and must:

- ensure that the toilets provided for the youngest children do not compromise health (paragraph 23(i))

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

- ensure that there are sufficient washrooms for the youngest children which take account of regulations 3 and 4 of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 23(j))
- ensure that the toilets and washroom for the youngest children are maintained in a tidy, clean and hygienic state (paragraph 23(m))
- ensure that lighting, heating and ventilation in the toilets and washrooms for the youngest children are satisfactory and have regard to the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 23(o))
- ensure that the furniture and fittings are appropriately designed for the age and needs of the youngest pupils registered at the school (paragraph 23(q))
- ensure that there is appropriate flooring in good condition in the toilets and washrooms for the youngest children (paragraph 23(r)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.⁴

What the school could do to improve further

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

- make sure that everyone can play their full part in ensuring the most effective features of the curriculum, teaching and assessment seen are applied consistently across the school
- develop a system to track the progress that children make from entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage until the end of Year 6.

⁴ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents.

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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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Independent Day School		
Date school opened	1886		
Age range of pupils	3–11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 40	Girls: 13	Total: 53
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 7	Girls: 3	Total: 10
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,150–£7,485		
Address of school	2 Albert Road Stoneygate Leicester LE2 2AA		
Telephone number	01162 707414		
Email address	office@leicesterprep.co.uk		
Headteacher	Christopher J Cann		
Proprietor	Mrs Navjot Johal		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



22 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Leicester Preparatory School, Leicester LE2 2AA

Thank you for the welcome you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school last week. We enjoyed speaking with you and your views are really important to us.

We found that your school is good and can see why you all enjoy coming to school. This is evident in your positive attitude to work and your good and often exemplary behaviour. The adults at school take care to make sure you are safe and nurtured well. As a result you grow in confidence and become well-rounded young people. Because of the good quality individual support you all receive in the small classes, the good teaching, and the interesting things you are given the opportunity to do, you make good progress in your work.

We would like your school to continue to improve, so we have asked them to do a few things.

- Make sure that all the adults in school play their part in spreading the best things we saw in lessons, right across the school.
- Track the progress that all children make from entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage until the end of Year 6 so that those who lead the school can be sure everyone is doing as well as they can.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Harvey
Her Majesty's Inspector