

# Park Hill School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Stephen Dennett

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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>

## Information about the school

Park Hill is an independent preparatory school for boys and girls aged three to seven years. It was opened in May 1949 and currently provides education for 99 pupils. The school is owned by a private company and occupies a large Victorian detached house in a residential area of Kingston upon Thames. There are a small number of disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs, but no pupils have a statement of special educational needs. A small minority of pupils speak English as an additional language. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are educated in three classes. Sixty-eight children are in receipt of early education funding. The proprietors run a separately registered after-school care facility on the site, which was inspected as part of the main school inspection. The headteacher was appointed in September 2011 and the school was last inspected in February 2009. The junior department closed in July 2010 and pupils now transfer to the junior school of their choice at seven. The school aims to develop the whole child and develop confident and balanced individuals.

## Evaluation of the school

Park Hill provides a good quality of education and is an improving school, which meets its aims. The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is also good. The school's leaders have dealt well with the weaknesses identified in the last report so that the school now meets all of the regulatory requirements for independent schools. As a result of good teaching and a broad and engaging curriculum, pupils make good progress in their learning and personal development, including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Safeguarding arrangements are good and pupils are well looked after; nearly all say they enjoy school, and parents and carers endorse this. Behaviour is good and pupils take part enthusiastically in all the school has to offer.

## Quality of education

The curriculum is good and meets pupils' needs effectively, including those of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is based on the National Curriculum and there is a strong emphasis on sports, music and drama. Pupils are also able to

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

study French and take additional instrumental lessons if required. Pupils are prepared successfully to sit entrance examinations for the move to their next school. All areas of learning are suitably covered and there is a good emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills. Schemes of work are of a variable quality and, notably, those for information and communication technology, geography, history and physical education do not give as clear an indication as other schemes about how learning will progress through the school or how that learning will be assessed. The school has identified the need to improve these aspects of its provision in its self-evaluation. A good programme is in place to promote pupils' personal, social and health education, which also contributes effectively to improving their spiritual, moral and cultural development. Pupils' artistic talents are nurtured well and a good standard of artwork is achieved. Music is also an important strength and pupils sing well in assemblies. The extra-curricular programme is strong, with pupils being able to choose from a range of lunchtime and after-school activities, including sports, art and drama. The curriculum provides the opportunity for all pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, to learn well and make good progress.

Teaching and assessment are good at all stages, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Nearly all pupils say that they enjoy their lessons, especially when they are involved in practical activities. Teachers have thorough subject knowledge and prepare resources well. Their planning ensures that they take account of the broad range of pupils' needs and class sizes are small enough to ensure good levels of individual support. A number of support assistants and teachers provide interventions outside the classroom to further support reading, writing and numeracy. This ensures that lower attaining younger pupils progress well and are able to achieve at least age-related expectations by the time they leave. Expectations of pupils' achievement and behaviour are high. Some outstanding teaching was seen, notably in mathematics. The best lessons move at a brisk pace and engage the pupils because the subject matter is relevant and interesting. There is the occasional instance when behaviour management is insecure so pupils lose concentration and the pace of the lesson slows. Resources are mainly of good quality and are sufficient in quantity and range to ensure the current curriculum can be suitably implemented. Occasionally time is lost because of pupils moving between locations for different lessons. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, some children are not always directed quickly enough to new tasks when they have finished the previous one and, again, time is lost.

Progress in lessons and over time is good. This is shown by pupils' work in books and by regular assessments made by the school. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making good progress against their individual targets because they receive effective learning support. The same is true of pupils who speak English as an additional language. There is no significant difference in the progress made by boys and girls. Work is marked well and teachers' comments usually indicate what pupils need to do to improve. Good use is made of standardised tests to track pupils' attainment and progress.

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

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school continues to place a strong emphasis on building pupils' confidence and raising their self-esteem. Their increasing maturity is evident as they progress through the school. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are well focused, serving as good ambassadors for the school. Almost all pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, say that they enjoy their time at Park Hill. Their attendance is good and they are aware of the high expectations placed upon them. Strong relationships exist between staff and pupils and between the majority of pupils themselves. Behaviour is good throughout the school and pupils understand the difference between right and wrong. There are many opportunities for pupils to take on additional responsibilities and they take these very seriously. Staff choose pupils to be monitors for particular tasks, thereby increasing pupils' confidence. There are good links with other schools. These provide opportunities for sports fixtures and tournaments and for pupils to help others who may have different needs from themselves.

The school encourages pupils to become involved in various charitable events, including fundraising. School assemblies celebrate pupils' achievements in all areas of their development, not just their academic achievement. Opportunities for reflection occur regularly in assemblies. Religious studies enable pupils to examine their own beliefs and those of others. A recent example of this was when a Chinese parent came into to tell pupils about the Chinese New Year. The school makes good use of the multicultural nature of the school to celebrate different festivals and 'special days'. Pupils' cultural awareness is raised through the curriculum, the regular visits out of school and the range of visitors to the school. The programme for personal, social and health education helps to develop pupils' knowledge of public institutions and services appropriately.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. All of the requirements for safer recruiting are met well, including checks on volunteers. There are effective procedures in place for child protection that are implemented well by members of staff who have been appropriately trained. The school has the full range of welfare policies in place as required by the regulations, including a robust anti-bullying policy, and they are implemented effectively. Pupils confirm that they feel safe and know who to turn to if they have concerns, and that these concerns are appropriately and quickly dealt with. The school has good arrangements for supervising visitors to the site. There are regular risk assessments of all areas of the school, including provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and risk assessments prior to school visits. Pupils are taught how to conduct themselves responsibly and to work and play safely around others. They also have a good understanding of road safety. There is a good level of fire safety; fire drills have been regularly practised

and are suitably recorded. The attendance and admissions registers are kept in accordance with regulatory requirements. The school fulfils its duties under the Equalities Act 2010. The after-school club is well organised and provides a good facility for parents and carers who cannot collect their children until late. Levels of care are good and suitable activities which engage pupils' interest are provided.

### **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

The school's safeguarding policies and practice are in full accordance with the regulations. There is a well-maintained electronic single central record that can be printed out. All of the required checks are carried out on staff and others, including a Criminal Records Bureau check, to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. The school has also been diligent in ensuring that foreign nationals are eligible to work in this country and have been cleared by their own safeguarding authorities where necessary.

### **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The premises and accommodation are appropriate for effective learning and keep pupils safe. The main school is housed on two floors, with suitable specialist rooms for information and communication technology, science and art. The school does not have a hall, but good use is made of a neighbouring church for drama, music and dance. There is a well-equipped kitchen that is kept scrupulously clean and meets high standards, as confirmed by the local environmental health officer. Some classes are accommodated in appropriate single-storey chalets in the school grounds. The extensive well-maintained garden has several soft-surfaced play areas and climbing equipment. It is used for gardening and environmental studies. The school has a good-sized playground and uses the adjoining Richmond Park for some outdoor activities. There is appropriate provision in the main building should pupils become ill.

### **Provision of information**

All of the required information is provided, or is made available, to parents and others. The school provides a good amount of clear information for parents and carers through its prospectus and its helpful website which signposts more detailed information available in school. Parents and carers say they are happy with the opportunities available to them to discuss their children's progress, and they report that there is daily and close contact when required. Written reports fulfil requirements to keep parents and others informed about their children's attainment and progress. Almost all of the parental questionnaires returned were positive in their response. There were no discernible trends in the small number of negative responses. There was praise for how closely the school works with parents and carers when a problem arises. Most parents and carers believe their children are happy and that the school is meeting their needs well. A typical comment was, 'All the staff are lovely and know each child by name, which is very welcoming.'

## **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The complaints procedure meets regulatory requirements. There have been no formal complaints in the last 12 months.

## **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:

- revise schemes of works for all subjects, but especially information and communication technology, history, geography and physical education so that they clearly identify how pupils' learning will progress through the school and how that learning will be assessed at each stage
- improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that all teachers have up-to-date training in effective behaviour and classroom management
- review timetabling and daily procedures to ensure that the best use is made of available time for teaching and 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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## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Preparatory and pre-preparatory		
<b>Date school opened</b>	1949		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 36	Girls: 22	Total: 58
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 26	Girls: 15	Total: 41
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£8,370		
<b>Address of school</b>	8 Queen's Road Kingston upon Thames Surrey KT2 7SH		
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8546 5496		
<b>Email address</b>	secretary@parkhillschool.com		
<b>Headmistress</b>	Emma Carroll		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Marie Christie – Park Hill School Limited		

**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.**



2 March 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Park Hill School, Kingston upon Thames KT2 7SH**

Thank you so much for welcoming us to your school. We very much enjoyed looking at what you do and how well you are learning. In nearly all of the lessons we went in to, we saw you working hard and enjoying what you were doing. Yours is a good school and your teachers do a good job. They make sure you have an interesting curriculum and plenty of exciting clubs to go to. Everyone makes sure you are kept safe and that you develop well personally. I was especially impressed with your singing in assembly. The children in the Nursery and Reception classes enjoy their activities and get on well with each other.

We have asked the school to think about improving a few things. First, we have asked your teachers to make sure their curriculum plans for every subject clearly show what you will learn and how it will be assessed. Another thing we noticed is sometime you do not behave as well as you could in lessons and teachers sometimes need to be a little stricter in not letting misbehaviour happen. You can help by not calling out and by being on your best behaviour at all times. The last thing we have suggested is that the school makes sure that you do not waste time when going from place to place. We also want teachers to help the younger children get on with activities more quickly so they do not waste time either. You can help by getting ready quickly and moving on to your next task straight away.

I am sure that you all want to make your school better, so I am sure you will want to do the things I have suggested. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Dennett  
Lead inspector