



Office for Standards
in Education

Talbot House Preparatory School

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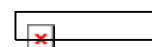
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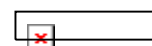
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School details

Introduction and summary

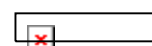


Purpose and scope of the inspection



This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school



Talbot House Preparatory School opened in 1969 and is situated in a residential area to the north of Bournemouth in a large detached house. It was taken over by the present proprietor in 1998. The current headteacher has been in post for two and a half years. It caters for boys and girls between the ages of three and eleven years and pupils are admitted following interviews with prospective parents and pupils. There are 67 boys and 53 girls on roll; three boys and one girl attend part-time. Twenty four pupils are below compulsory school age and are funded under the government's Nursery Scheme. There are 19 pupils for whom English is not their first language. There are no pupils with statements of special educational need but the school has placed 15 pupils on its register of special educational need for which it is providing additional support.

Summary of main findings

Talbot House Preparatory School provides a good education for its pupils. It is organised very efficiently and provides a caring and happy atmosphere where pupils gain self-confidence. In just over half of the lessons the quality of teaching is good and it is never less than satisfactory. The curriculum is well structured and gives pupils a broad and balanced education that is relevant to their needs. The Foundation Stage curriculum is good and provides the children with a solid base to start their school life. Pupils' work is assessed regularly and teachers are beginning to use these assessments effectively to identify areas of study that need more attention both for individuals and for larger groups. The school now plans to use this information to track individual pupils' progress and to set targets for them. Pupils achieve well, especially in English and mathematics, with many gaining places at local independent or grammar schools.

What the school does well

- it is very well organised;
- it provides a caring and positive ethos in which all pupils behave well and feel welcome and valued;
- it provides a broad curriculum enriched with a wide and imaginative range of additional activities; and
- it gives children in the Foundation Stage a secure start to their education.

What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations

- ensure that stairways are not obstructed by the storage of coats, hats and bags.

What the school should do in order to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 2002:

- draw up a three-year action plan to improve disabled access.

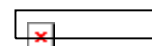
Next Steps

Whilst not specifically required by the regulations, the school may wish to consider the following

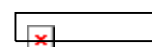
points as areas for development:

- use a more structured approach to developing pupils' writing styles especially in Key Stage 2; and
- continue to develop the personal, social and health education programme.

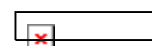
Compliance with the regulations for registration



1. The quality of education provided by the school



The quality of the curriculum



The school is successful in meeting its aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum which encourages pupils' enjoyment and commitment to learning. Schemes of work have regard to the guidance for subjects in the Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum. In addition, pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 have French lessons each week. Schemes of work are satisfactory and benefit from reference to the National Curriculum documents and the national frameworks for literacy and mathematics. This helps to ensure progression in learning experiences for pupils. A range of commercial schemes provides useful additional resources for teaching and learning.

English and mathematics have an appropriate emphasis and overall pupils achieve well in national and standardised tests, making satisfactory and sometimes good progress. In Key Stage 2, however, the curriculum does not provide sufficient structure to systematically develop pupils' writing skills in different genres. An additional focus is being given to science in order to raise achievement in the subject.

Although there is not a specific programme for personal, social and health education an annual 'Health Week' has recently been included in the curriculum. This initiative helps pupils to develop an awareness of health and personal issues. It also has the benefit of providing and developing strong community links. Pupils commented that they enjoyed the event. Other aspects of health education are included as part of the science curriculum.

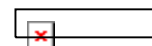
The school is beginning to make good use of its new computer suite. Pupils have regular opportunities to develop their skills in information and communication technology (ICT) and are beginning to show competency in using a range of age-related software. The school is fully aware that there is further potential to develop wider use of ICT in other subjects, in addition its existing successful use in English and science.

Good use is made of the local recreation ground, sports centre and swimming pool to provide suitable opportunities to support pupils' physical development. Although space outside is limited the school makes effective use of hard play areas to provide opportunities for more adventurous play and study for the youngest pupils.

Pupils' learning in English, especially reading, is enhanced by school book events, World Book Day and poetry days. Other curriculum related visits including the Year 6 excursion to Stratford richly

enhance pupils' learning. Pupils appreciate and enjoy the many enrichment activities provided by the school. Weekly clubs offer opportunities for chess, Chinese, origami, and cookery while further optional after-school include activities include Spanish, tennis, football, ballet, drama and music.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



The quality of teaching seen was good in just over half the lessons and was never less than satisfactory. Lesson planning is thorough. It has clear objectives that take appropriate account of pupils' previous learning. The best teaching demands high standards and ensures that pupils with different levels of ability are challenged appropriately. In some lessons, however, teachers' questions do not always help pupils develop a greater insight or to give considered answers, especially those with higher levels of attainment.

The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is good overall although there is scope for teachers and classroom assistants to encourage the children to engage in discussions and imaginative play still further. Teachers have a good understanding of the needs of these young children and their planning is detailed and firmly based on the six areas of learning identified in the Foundation Stage curriculum guidance. Both outdoor and indoor play are managed well and used effectively by teachers to develop the children's language as well as their social skills. Pupils are assessed regularly and these assessments are used effectively to map children's development as well as providing information for their further development.

Pupils who need extra help, such as those with special educational needs or those who are learning English as an additional language, are supported by teachers either in class or in smaller groups. Teachers write detailed individual education plans (IEPs) for pupils with special educational needs which set clear targets for development. The targets would benefit from dates being set for their attainment. All these pupils make sound progress and are fully integrated into the life and work of the school.

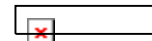
Teachers know their pupils well and relationships are good. They expect pupils to work hard and sensibly and are beginning to encourage pupils to become more independent thinkers. In a science lesson for example, pupils had to complete an experiment and then decide for themselves the best way to record their results. The teacher allowed the pupils to make this decision giving only minimal guidance. However, in some lessons the level of challenge is not always appropriate, especially for the more able pupils, and there are missed opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively. In some work in geography and history there is an over-dependence on worksheets or copied texts so that all pupils complete the same work at the same level. Consequently, pupils are not required to think for themselves sufficiently and the tasks do not reinforce the development of their reading and writing skills. Teachers' subject knowledge and expertise are sound. The school makes good use of some specialist teaching in lessons such as science and ICT. The headteacher encourages staff to take part in in-service training; this has a beneficial impact on the quality of teaching.

The school has satisfactory procedures for the assessment of pupils' progress and is developing their quality further. A range of national standardised and internal tests is used. The information from these tests together with teachers' knowledge of their pupils is analysed in detail in order to highlight strengths and weaknesses both for year groups and for individuals. Teachers are now beginning to use this information effectively when planning work. The school is developing these procedures still further in order to set targets for individual pupils. This will enable it to track pupils' progress closely and monitor this against teachers', pupils' and parents' expectations and against the school's predictions. The quality of marking is sound; the best includes evaluative comments which help pupils to improve.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils



Pupils' social and moral development is good. The school has a friendly and happy atmosphere and relationships are generally good. Pupils behave sensibly around the school and in lessons and they play well together at break times. They are courteous to each other and to adults. The school's code of behaviour is clear and pupils fully understand the system of rewards and sanctions. External visits, especially to theatres, the excursion in Year 6 and the regular school drama and musical productions provide good opportunities for social and cultural development.

Celebration of pupils' work, for example publishing poetry in newsletters, the selection of 'pupil of the week' from each class and the recognition of achievements in Friday assembly provide very good opportunities to raise self esteem and applaud success. In all classes pupils have responsibilities and older pupils take on some additional duties as head boy and girl and house captains.

Pupils develop a good sense of moral and social responsibility through many activities during the year. The school raises money for charities and promotes pupils' awareness of environmental issues, for example through the collection and recycling of old telephone directories, for which the school has won awards. Pupils' recent participation in the 'Health Week' provided good opportunities, not only for them to become more aware of healthy living but also to promote an understanding of the importance of services and support organisations available within the community such as the Dorset Air Ambulance.

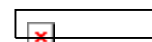
The spiritual development of pupils is satisfactory. Opportunities for reflection occur in assemblies and some 'circle times' with younger pupils. One class, for example, starts the day calmly with personal reflection in which pupils consider the welfare of themselves and others. Older pupils occasionally discuss matters of concern including national events or issues of a personal nature. Discussions with teachers and pupils show that opportunities for such reflection in lessons are rarely pre-planned. More could be made of the potential of different areas of the curriculum to support pupils' spiritual development.

The culturally diverse backgrounds of pupils and the range of activities that take place help to promote good cultural awareness in the school. As well as Christian festivals, celebrations from other faiths and cultures, for example Divali, Eid, and the Chinese New Year, are highlighted often through class-led assemblies. Pupils also learn about other countries and communities in geography. These studies sometimes include an element which highlights environmental issues such as pollution and how this might impact on developing nations. Some teachers also use books in English lessons with stories from around the world and discuss issues raised either through the story content or illustrations. The celebration of the World Book Day also highlighted the traditions and lifestyles of different cultures and communities.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



Arrangements to promote the welfare, health and safety of pupils are generally good. The school has effective procedures to promote good behaviour and to combat bullying which are well understood and followed by staff and pupils. Child protection and health and safety guidelines are well documented. The headteacher and all staff, have attended child protection training and take these responsibilities seriously. There are detailed records of sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious disciplinary offences.

Pupils are well supervised and feel safe in school. Their good behaviour and sensible movement around the premises helps to alleviate any congestion caused by the fairly restricted space within the buildings especially around the stairways and landings. However, the storage of coats, hats and bags on pegs down the stairs is a potential hazard and could affect the safe passage of pupils and staff. The headteacher has recently completed certificated health and safety training.

First Aid procedures and provision are appropriate and satisfactory records are kept of any accidents. Regular risk assessments are undertaken by staff and due regard has been given to national advice for safety during outside visits. Regular fire drills are held and recommendations from the most recent fire officer's inspection have been complied with.

The school has not yet prepared plans to improve disabled access so as to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

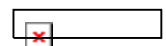
In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *ensure that stairways are not obstructed by the storage of coats, hats and bags (paragraph 3(4)).*

What the school should do in order to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 2002:

- *draw up a three-year action plan to improve disabled access.*

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

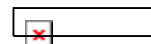


All staff are appropriately qualified and between them have a wide range of experience. There are sound procedures to check with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) all staff who come into contact with pupils. The school has good procedures to check the appropriate qualifications, suitability and medical fitness of new staff before their appointment is confirmed.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The premises are in good order. The school has sought to make best use of the somewhat limited space. Displays of pupils' work enhance the environment and provide good opportunities to celebrate achievement.

Classrooms and playground areas are small but adequate. Arrangements to restrict the use of the outside play areas to two classes at any one time helps to alleviate problems caused by the limited play space. Recent improvements to provide a quiet area have the potential to make the playground more adaptable to pupils' needs, to give greater flexibility of use and to provide pupils with increased opportunities to spend time in smaller social groups.

The school has successfully improved the teaching accommodation by creating a computer room and library. These are very good facilities which have broadened the curriculum.

The outside play area for pupils in the kindergarten and reception classes has a soft surface, climbing frame and small sensory garden. This area is used successfully not only to provide a play space but also serves to enhance learning across the curriculum. For example, pupils in the Foundation Stage were able to conduct a mini-beast search in the garden area.

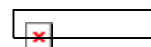
Although the school has an adequate number of washrooms and toilets for pupils the arrangement for their use is unsatisfactory. The school should assign WCs distinctively for the use of boys and girls, and no pupils should use facilities designated for staff. The toilets for use of the youngest pupils are not all sufficiently close to the kindergarten.

The use of a local recreation ground and sports centre provides good opportunities for pupils that are not possible at the school site.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The quality of information that the school provides is very good. The school has very good links with parents both on a formal and informal basis. Staff are readily available to talk to parents on a day-to-day basis. The headteacher writes informative weekly newsletters which keep parents fully up-to-date with the events that take place within the school including the celebration of individual pupils' successes.

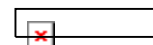
The prospectus has been updated recently and includes all the necessary information including a list of the policies available in school for parents to see on request. The information available for parents includes the curriculum policy, child protection procedures and the complaints policy.

Over seventy per cent of parents responded to the pre-inspection parent questionnaire. They expressed very high levels of satisfaction with the school with many writing additional favourable comments in support of the school such as *'... it is a stimulating environment for learning and is led by an excellent, dedicated and enthusiastic headmistress ...'*.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints

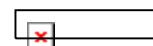


The school has good written complaints procedures which fully meet the requirements of the regulations. They are available to parents and prospective parents, and set out the time scales and procedures that the school will follow in the event of a complaint. The new prospectus states clearly that a full copy of the procedures is available on request.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details



Name of school:	Talbot House Preparatory School		
DfES ref number:	837/6005		
Type of school:	Primary		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11 Years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 64,	Girls 52,	Total 116
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys 3,	Girls 1,	Total 4
Annual fees (day pupils):	£2,250 - £4,287		
Address of school:	8 Firs Glen Road Bournemouth Dorset BH9 2LR		
E-mail address:	admin.talbot@ntlworld.com		
Telephone number:	01202 510348		
Fax number:	01202 775904		
Headteacher:	Mrs Charlotte Oosthuizen		
Proprietor:	Mrs J Broadway		
Lead Inspector:	Mr David Houghton		
Dates of inspection:	24 - 27 May 2004		
