



Office for Standards  
in Education

# Ashgrove School

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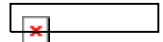
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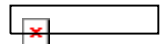
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**Introduction and summary**

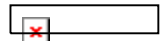


**Purpose and scope of the inspection**



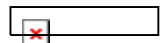
This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

**Information about the school**



Ashgrove School is a non-denominational independent day school for pupils aged 3 to 11 years in the London Borough of Bromley. The principal, who founded the school in 1986, is the proprietor. The school is on one site and occupies a building which was originally a private house. It is set in its own grounds, but these are restricted in size; accordingly the school makes use of sports facilities elsewhere in Bromley. At the time of the inspection there were 117 pupils on roll (73 boys and 44 girls) of whom two were part time. None of the pupils have statements of special educational need.

**Summary of main findings**



educational philosophy of the headteacher and which are articulated in the school prospectus. English and mathematics form the core of a balanced curriculum, which provides its pupils with a sound education. The quality of teaching is usually satisfactory and is often good, and this enables pupils to make good progress. It is a safe and secure community in which pupils feel valued and where they can develop positive attitudes. Relationships at all levels are good. The school is well led and strongly supported by parents, who value the education that their children receive there.

### What the school does well

- teaching is effective for all pupils and careful attention is paid to the specific needs of individual children;
- it promotes good progress and enables pupils to achieve high standards in English and mathematics;
- it is successful in preparing pupils for the next stage of their education and in helping them to secure places at the secondary schools of their choice;
- it has pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds. By providing a friendly and caring atmosphere it enables all pupils to develop into self-confident and responsible young people; and
- the headteacher ensures that the school's aims, as set out in the prospectus, are met.

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

- ensure that the attendance registers are marked in accordance with requirements;
- provide, in the information to parents, the name, address, and telephone number of the proprietor;
- provide parents with reports on the progress and attainment of their children in all the main subjects taught; and
- ensure that the complaints procedure fully complies with requirements.

### Compliance with the regulations for registration

#### 1. The quality of education provided by the school

#### The quality of the curriculum

Ashgrove School provides a curriculum which covers all of the areas required by the regulations. It enables pupils to develop skills and knowledge in language, including both English and French, mathematics, science, technology, human and social disciplines, physical education, and in aesthetic and creative subjects. In both the Foundation Stage and in Key Stages 1 and 2 it provides adequate time for these subjects and the school provides specialist teaching in most areas. The school prospectus emphasises the primary importance of English and mathematics to establish a secure basis for the rest of the curriculum.

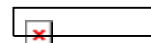
The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is carefully planned. It provides the pupils with teaching in all of the six recommended areas of learning and places a strong emphasis on the acquisition of basic skills in communication, language, literacy, and mathematics. The planning takes account of the limited space available in the classroom and has an emphasis on teaching subjects separately and distinctively. A planned programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) has only recently been introduced, but in many lessons pupils have opportunities to develop independence through making choices. While the pupils have opportunities to practise fine motor control by using pencils and other small items of equipment, the school does not have the resources for more general physical development, such as large play equipment. The school needs to improve the resources available for the younger pupils and provide a more distinctive curriculum for them.

In Key Stages 1 and 2 the school is very successful in developing pupils' writing, speaking and listening skills, and in encouraging them to read widely. It provides them with a thorough grounding in maths and provides new and interesting ways of approaching the subject. Its population includes a wide range of ability, and what is taught is suitable both to the age and the ability of the pupils. There are no pupils with statements of special educational need, but individual strengths and weaknesses are well known and are catered for in appropriate ways. There are very good opportunities for sport.

The curriculum is described in outline in the school prospectus, but parents can, on request, obtain more detailed information from the school on what is taught. There are schemes of work, although these vary very much in their quality and breadth of content and several need to be more fully developed; this is a matter of which the headteacher is fully aware. Day-by-day planning by teachers is thorough and detailed.

Although the school provides some opportunities for curriculum enrichment, such as a drama club, sports clubs, a lace-making club, and a computer club, it does not have a wide range of extra-curricular activities including trips or visits outside lessons. A significant number of parents indicated in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire that they would like to see a wider range of activities. The school might like to review its present provision.

## **The quality of the teaching and assessment**



The school provides a good quality of teaching for its pupils, enabling them to progress well, particularly in English and mathematics. The teaching in these basic subjects is pitched accurately so as to provide challenge for the pupils and build sequentially on what they already know and can do. In English, for example, the texts provided for comprehension exercises successfully broaden the pupils' vocabulary by introducing new words in a familiar context. Writing is taught systematically and the pupils make good progress in handwriting and in the use of punctuation. In mathematics, the teaching places firm emphasis on pupils acquiring confidence in the accurate use of mental methods for calculation and in understanding the value of numbers. Pupils are taught correct methods for written calculations and teachers are precise in teaching the language of mathematics. Teachers frame questions carefully, prompting the pupils to give full answers, using the correct terms to explain their answers and working methods.

Lessons are well-planned. Planning takes account of progress in earlier work and the outcomes of assessments of the progress made by different groups of pupils. Lessons are generally well balanced and the time available is divided well between instruction, explanations, and activities for the pupils. In many lessons, teachers explain the purpose of the work to the pupils and how it links up with previous lessons, and sufficient time is set aside towards the end for the teacher to probe into what the pupils have learned. In one lesson, close questioning of the pupils revealed what they had learned about place value in mathematics and where gaps remained in their understanding. Teachers take account of the pupils who learn at a slower rate than others in a class and keep a watchful eye on how well they are coping with the work. Where necessary, further explanations are given and the work is broken down into easier steps.

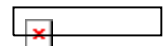
Good use is made of teachers' specialist knowledge and particular subject expertise. While this is especially the case in English and mathematics, it also applies in other subjects. For example, in physical education, the pupils receive accurate tuition and benefit from the teacher's knowledge of health and safety. In one lesson, the pupils learned how to use skipping ropes and hoops without endangering themselves or others. In a history lesson, the provision of visual material helped to bring the history of Bromley to life for pupils.

The classes are small and conducive to the promotion of good relationships between teachers and pupils. Teachers expect that pupils will behave well and, as a result, lessons are conducted in an orderly atmosphere. The pupils are confident about putting forward their ideas and moments of humour are enjoyed on appropriate occasions.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

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



Ashgrove is a small school in which individual pupils are well known and cared for, and it provides a sound and secure setting in which teaching and learning can take place. The atmosphere of the school is happy and relaxed, yet at the same time it is clear that pupils are encouraged to behave well and develop a disciplined approach to their work. Pupils are valued as individuals and there is a strong philosophical opposition to any sort of ranking, which, according to the school's aims is "... totally discouraged in favour of encouraging children to make full use of their natural abilities and to become worthwhile members of society."

The school is firmly committed to moral education and moral issues are dealt with as they arise in subjects across the curriculum. The school has recognised that it needs to approach this area in a more systematic way and is in the process of introducing a course of personal, social and health education (PSHE), although this is not yet fully documented and needs further development. However, in a good lesson with Year 6 on the theme of "ambitions", pupils took an active part and put forward clearly articulated ideas of their own. This was a well thought out lesson which helped pupils to focus on moral issues in the context of a different culture, but which was also relevant to their own situation. The school is successful in helping pupils to understand the difference between right and wrong and in giving them an introduction to public services and institutions in England. There is a strong sense of mutual acceptance among the children. Whatever their background, boys and girls co-operate well and pupils are eager to help and encourage each other.

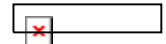
Although elements of spiritual and cultural education occur in the curriculum, both need further development. However, French is taught in Key Stage 2, and through this pupils develop some understanding of another nation and its culture. Religious Education is now being given a higher priority, but the scheme of work is, as yet, rather limited and needs to be amplified. The school is non-denominational, but it has within it pupils from a wide variety of national, ethnic and cultural

backgrounds, and there are representatives of different faith communities among both the pupils and the staff. The school should consider how it can better draw on the diversity of faith and cultures amongst the pupils so as to extend their spiritual and cultural awareness.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils**



The school provides a safe and healthy environment for the pupils. The headteacher and staff place a high priority on identifying potential risks to the pupils' safety and on taking action to reduce any such risks.

A range of policies has been written and their procedures are embedded in practice in the day-to-day running of the school. Those on bullying, child protection and health and safety provide a simple outline of the school's procedures. The pupils speak warmly of their confidence that any incidence of bullying will be dealt with effectively. The school has sufficient qualified staff to provide First Aid, and their training is recent and comprehensive. Procedures for the administration of medicines are clearly stated.

The school's behaviour policy reflects a determination to promote and achieve high standards of behaviour among the pupils. The need for other than minor sanctions is rare. Where necessary, sanctions are tailored to the individual needs of the pupil concerned and are used with a view to improving behaviour. Close attention is paid by teachers to ensuring that pupils learn to take care of themselves and others during the school day. Routines for moving around the school are firmly established and understood and, as a result, pupils conduct themselves calmly.

The admission register is kept correctly. While attendance registers are marked accurately, daily totals are not recorded and, in the afternoons, registers are not called at the beginning of the session, as required.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

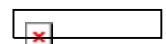
The school meets almost all the requirements for registration.

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

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

- meet the requirements for completing attendance registers (paragraph 3(9)).

**4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff**



The headteacher, who is also the school's proprietor, has overseen the school's growth and

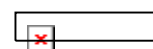
have risen, care has been taken to appoint teachers who have appropriate experience and a range of specialist skills and knowledge. The school fulfils its duty to ensure that personnel appointed are suitable to work with children and the requisite checks are made with the Criminal Records Bureau.

Staffing is at an appropriate level for the size of the school and ensures that the number of pupils in each class is small. Teachers who have specialisms in subjects enhance the school's capacity to provide a broad curriculum.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation**



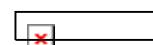
The school occupies a single site about one mile from the centre of Bromley. It is in a residential area and is surrounded by private housing. It consists of a former family house approximately one hundred years old, and a small annexe which was originally a coach house. The buildings have been imaginatively converted for use as a school and they provide a good environment for teaching and learning. They are adequate in size for the present number of pupils on roll. Each year group has its own individual classroom in which most teaching takes place, but specialised subject provision is limited to a dual purpose room which doubles as a library and computer room. The provision for the youngest pupils needs to be reconsidered by the school: the indoor accommodation is limited and there is no designated outdoor area for their use. There are adequate toilet and washroom facilities for pupils, with and separate provision for staff. There is no space large enough inside the school for all the pupils to assemble together comfortably, but in good weather the school can assemble on the playground. The buildings are well maintained and are in a good state of decoration, and both classrooms and corridors are enhanced by displays of pupils' work.

The exterior environment is good. A large garden at the rear of the house has a fenced hard surface play area, an area with picnic tables, a small memorial garden, and an area at the bottom of the garden with a large, specially constructed semi-circular table which can be used for outdoor teaching in good weather. The outside area lacks a soft-surface play area and the surface of the playground is beginning to develop patches of loose gravel. The headteacher is aware of the problem and plans are in hand to resurface the playground. The school makes good use of sports facilities in Bromley.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**6. The quality of information for parents and other partners**



Information is provided to all parents and prospective parents in the form of a school prospectus which is both attractive and informative. This contains all of the information that is required by the current regulations, except that it does not give the usual residential address of the proprietor. In addition, parents can request information from the school about its policies and practices, which are contained in a comprehensive policies document.

In addition to this basic information, the school communicates regularly with parents and carers on a yearly and termly basis. It publishes an annual calendar of events and sends out a termly newsletter, as well as occasional letters relating to specific subjects.

Communication with individual parents is good. The school has an open access policy for parents and carers and teachers are encouraged to deal with any queries on the day that they are made. There are termly written reports to parents indicating the progress pupils are making, but the reporting on subjects is limited to English and mathematics.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

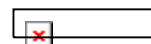
No.

***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 the full name, usual residential address and telephone number of the school proprietor are provided (paragraph 6(2)(b)); and
- provide parents with an annual written report on the progress and attainment of pupils in the main subject areas taught (paragraph 6(5)).

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



The school has a clear policy for handling complaints and this meets almost all the requirements of the regulations, the single omission being the timescales for the management of a complaint. The policy allows for a complaint to be dealt with informally, but includes further formal procedures so that, when necessary, complaints can be considered fairly and objectively. The policy has recently been circulated to parents, who noted that they were aware of its existence. The overwhelming majority of parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

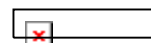
The school meets almost all the requirements for registration.

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

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

- include clear timescales for the management of complaints within its stated procedures (paragraph 7c).

**School details**



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Name of school:

Ashgrove School



DfES ref number:	305/6075		
Type of school:	Preparatory		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	3-11		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 72,	Girls 43,	Total 115
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys 1,	Girls 1,	Total 2
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 0,	Girls 0,	Total 0
Annual fees (day pupils):	£5,625		
Annual fees (boarders):	Not applicable		
Address of school:	116 Widmore Road		
	Bromley		
	Kent		
	BR1 3BE		
E-mail address:	secretary@ashgrove.org.uk		
Telephone number:	020 8460 4143		
Headteacher:	Dr Patricia Ash		
Proprietor:	Dr Patricia Ash		
Lead Inspector:	Dr Roy Long		
Dates of inspection:	24 - 27 May 2004		

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