



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report
Prestwich Preparatory School
Independent school
DfES ref no: 351/6012

Dates of inspection: 20 – 23 September 2004

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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

Prestwich Preparatory School is an independent day school for pupils aged two to eleven years. It developed from the first teaching nursery in Manchester which was established in 1968. The school has 93 full-time and 29 part-time pupils. Forty-three pupils are funded under the nursery grant scheme.

The school is based on two sites. The main building is Victorian and is leased from the local authority. There is an additional nursery department on another site approximately half a mile from the main building which operates from 08.00 to 18.00 and opens for fifty weeks a year. This shares its building with a private nursery which cares for babies and toddlers. The school provides care from 08.00 until lessons start at 09.00 and from 15.50pm until 18.00. Play schemes are run each holiday for pupils at the school and their siblings. The school gains greatly from being adjacent to Heaton Park, of which it makes full use. Most pupils live within a 5 mile radius of the school.

Prestwich Preparatory School aims;

‘to foster a work ethic whereby all children are encouraged to develop self motivation and academic interests.’

Summary of main findings

Prestwich Preparatory School is a successful school which provides a well-taught curriculum that matches the requirements of different age groups. The school meets almost all the regulations for registration. It provides a good quality of education and the pupils make very good progress, particularly in English and mathematics. The school welcomes pupils into its friendly and caring community where they each feel valued as an individual. Pupils work hard and have an infectious enthusiasm for learning.

What the school does well

- it is very effective in matching what is taught and how it is taught to each individual's needs;
 - it achieves its stated aim to enable pupils to gain admission to the secondary school of their choice;
 - it instils self-confidence and mutual respect in pupils;
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- the pupils' behaviour is very good; and
- it gives priority to the welfare of its pupils.

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

- prepare and implement a written policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school; and
- maintain an admission register in line with the regulations.

Next Steps

Whilst not required by the regulations, the school should consider the following points for development in order to improve further:

- co-ordinate existing curriculum documents into a cohesive long term plan;
- extend the use of information and communication technology in lessons; and
- allow time before the end of each lesson to review learning with the pupils.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The school makes good curriculum provision which meets the pupils' needs. The Foundation Stage curriculum is taught in the nursery departments and the younger infants' class with a good emphasis on play and developing personal and social skills. Computer keyboard skills are taught from the early infant stage although the use of computers is limited with older pupils. There is a strong emphasis on English and mathematics throughout the school, which prepares pupils for secondary education. In the afternoons, the subjects are more integrated; for example, design and technology may be taught through art and craft. This was seen when older juniors were encouraged to extend their design and sewing skills by making small, personalised gifts for parents, such as a mobile telephone holder. Elementary French grammar and conversation is taught to older pupils.

Basic schemes of work have been devised by the staff and are used throughout the school. Effective use is made of workbooks and published materials. Personal, social and health education is integrated successfully into the curriculum. There is specialist teaching in football and general teaching of perceptual and physical co-ordination skills for all age groups, provided by a coach from the Bobby Charlton School of Football.

In the autumn term, there is emphasis for the oldest pupils on English, mathematics and reasoning to assist them in their preparation for the entrance examinations for grammar schools. This is balanced by increased provision of more creative projects during the spring and summer terms. Earlier this year, the pupils prepared for an art exhibition and a book day when they dressed as their favourite characters. The school is fortunate in being able to use the adjacent park for sports activities.

For pupils in need of additional support and the most able, the curriculum is modified skilfully to meet their individual requirements. This has proven very successful through work in small groups with a highly skilled specialist teacher. There is good curriculum support for pupils for whom English is not their first language.

The quality of the teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers know their pupils extremely well and relationships are very good at all levels. Pupils respond positively to the expectations that they behave responsibly and work hard throughout the school. The pupils acquire new knowledge with enthusiasm, increase their understanding and develop new skills. They make very good progress by the end of their time at the school as shown by the high number of grammar school places they achieve.

The teachers have a clear understanding of what they plan to teach at each stage of the term. They make very effective use of their expertise by combining groups of pupils according to their age and ability, especially in mathematics and English. A particular strength of the

school is the individual and small group support given to pupils in need of additional help. Both infants and juniors work in mixed aged groups and are given appropriate tasks according to their ability and not necessarily their age. The most successful lessons had an interesting introduction which built on previous learning, followed by a purposeful activity and an opportunity for pupils to reflect on what they had learnt. This did not always happen at the end of every lesson. Homework is used effectively to reinforce learning. Even the youngest children take home books to share and enjoy with their parents.

In lessons, pupils respond enthusiastically and are encouraged to discuss their ideas. This enables them to develop self-confidence and a mature approach to learning. For example, the oldest juniors each gave a short presentation on their out-of-school interests. They brought in objects to support their presentation and answered questions from the rest of the group. This is beneficial in preparing pupils for the next stage of their education and for adult life. There is generally a good pace to lessons and pupils respond as eager, diligent and enthusiastic learners. The staff are good at using their knowledge of individual pupils to enable them to build on previous learning. This was seen in an infant class when they were learning their letter sounds.

Teachers are supportive and encouraging. Pupils try very hard and teachers reward them for their efforts through praise and the house-point system. There is a good emphasis on the development and reinforcement of routines, for example at lunch and break times which are introduced effectively in the nursery class. Pupils have good opportunities for practical learning exemplified in a lesson where they were comparing the use of rulers and other means of measurement, such as hand-spans.

Teachers know their pupils' capabilities, mark their work and give them very good oral feedback during lessons. Children are assessed effectively in the Foundation Stage using the Stepping Stones towards the Early Learning Goals. Parents are given a detailed annual report on their child's progress and have regular opportunities to discuss this with the staff. There is a rigorous programme of testing to prepare pupils for the grammar school entrance examinations which are at the beginning of the spring term. There are weekly tests on spellings and tables, checking basic acquisition of knowledge.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The school makes good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is a welcoming environment in which pupils feel cared for. There is an ethos of mutual respect and consideration for others. Pupils are valued as people and individual differences are celebrated. The staff take an active interest in their welfare. Prestwich Preparatory School is a happy place and pupils enjoy being there. Staff set good examples to the pupils and provide positive role models.

Pupils' behaviour is very good and they have a clear understanding of right and wrong. They are polite and spontaneously welcome visitors to their school. The school rules and expectations are implicitly understood by all the pupils. The older pupils are given a high

level of responsibility for the care and welfare of younger pupils. For example, they help to serve them lunches and assist in supervision at playtimes. The school house system is effective in promoting a sense of responsibility among the pupils and gives house captains an important leadership role.

The school has developed strong links with the local community. They regularly participate in fund-raising activities, particularly for local children's charities. The school helps to broaden older pupils' general knowledge and they are encouraged to take an active interest in current affairs. This equips them well for the next stage of their education.

A range of festivals and customs from a variety of faiths and cultures is recognised and celebrated. For example, the school organised a 'Food from around the World day', when parents contributed dishes from their own culture. The weekly assembly aims to give pupils the opportunity to reflect on local and world issues.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school gives a high priority to the welfare, health and safety of its pupils, who are well cared for. There are clear written policies to promote good behaviour amongst the pupils, to prevent bullying and to ensure that all adults are aware of issues relating to child protection. Pupils are confident that any problems are dealt with swiftly by the staff. The school makes effective use of the Bury Area Child Protection Committee documentation and the headteacher is the trained child protection officer. The school has not yet prepared a written policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on visits outside the school. Procedures are in place, but they do not fully relate to national guidance.

The school keeps and monitors thorough accident, incident and First Aid records. A large number of staff hold a first aid qualification for both the workplace and children. A comprehensive fire safety risk assessment was carried out in 2004, and a satisfactory report has been received from the fire officer. Regular fire drills are held and documented accurately. All fire appliances are checked annually. The school has conducted a detailed health and safety risk assessment. Pupils are always properly supervised while on school premises and when using outdoor play areas including the adjacent park.

Attendance is very good. However, there are a small number of pupils who are regularly late and this may hinder their education. The school's admission register does not comply fully with the regulations, but the information is being updated.

The school has recently devised a plan to show how over the next three years, it can be made accessible to eligible pupils with disabilities.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets most, but not all of the requirements.

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:

- prepare and implement a written policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school which has regard to Department for Education and Skills (DfES) guidance (reference HSPV2): Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits (paragraph 3(2)(c)); and
- maintain an admission register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 (paragraph 3(9)).

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school is owned by the head teacher. All staff have appropriate checks to ensure their suitability to work with children. Prior to appointment, new staff have their professional expertise checked through evidence from previous employers, character references and professional qualifications. The school has a robust procedure for making appointments through interview and a trial period.

Most teaching staff are suitably qualified and experienced or in training. There is a good balance of experience within the staff. The school benefits greatly from the expertise and commitment of the senior staff team.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The main school occupies a Victorian building which was formerly a local authority school. This comprises a hall, a range of suitable classrooms and a large room used for the nursery. In addition, there is one prefabricated classroom at the rear of the building. These premises are leased from the local authority. The building is in a satisfactory decorative order and is clean and tidy. There is a range of displays of pupils' work which celebrate achievement. The classrooms are sufficiently spacious for the number of pupils. The attractive classroom for the lower infant pupils is shared by two classes and this works effectively. The school is adjacent to a very large public park which is used extensively for sport, recreation and nature study.

The additional nursery department occupies the first floor of a detached building approximately half a mile from the main school. The ground floor is leased to a private nursery for very young children. The school has adapted the premises to provide a stimulating environment. There is a useful fenced outdoor play area at the rear of the building.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

The school meets all the regulations relating to the provision of information to parents. They are provided with an appropriate range of information through the school prospectus and the parents' file on the notice board. Regular memoranda are sent out by the school.

Communications between home and school are good. The school operates an 'open-door' policy and parents are welcome to make an appointment to meet with staff. There are two formal consultation meetings for parents each year and they receive a detailed written report at the end of the summer term. They are also provided with details of their child's results from standardised tests. Parents of final year pupils are given very good support and advice to help them in choosing the most suitable secondary school for their child.

Only a small proportion of parents returned the questionnaires sent out before the inspection and they showed a high level of satisfaction with the school.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The school has a clear and effective policy which meets all the regulations for handling complaints. This is included in the parents' file which is available on their notice board. The parents' response to questionnaires indicated that some were unaware of this document. The school plans to ensure that all parents are aware of the procedures and this information will be included in the next memorandum.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details

Name of school:	Prestwich Preparatory School		
DfES ref number:	351/6012		
Type of school:	Preparatory		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	2 - 11 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 43,	Girls 50,	Total 93
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys 17,	Girls 12,	Total 29
Number of boarders:	Boys 0,	Girls 0,	Total 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 0,	Girls 0,	Total 0
Annual fees (day pupils):	£3,336		
	£1,680 - £2,070 part time (40 weeks)		
Annual fees (boarders):	N/A		
Address of school:	400 Bury Old Road Prestwich Manchester M25 1PZ		
E-mail address:	N/A		
Telephone number:	0161 7731223		
Fax number:	0161 7731223		
Headteacher:	Miss Patricia Shiels		
Proprietor:	Miss Patricia Shiels		
Chair of the governing body:	N/A		
Lead Inspector:	Mrs Susan Wheeler HMI		
Dates of inspection:	20 – 23 September 2004		

Notes