



# The Viking School

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### **Introduction and summary**

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### **Purpose and scope of the inspection**

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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**

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The Viking School is the only independent school in the seaside town of Skegness. It is based near the town centre in a nineteenth century detached house which has been used as a school since the 1940s. Significant additions have been made to the original house to accommodate the present number of pupils. The current proprietor/principal is a long serving member of staff who has owned the school for just over three years. She has recently completed a major programme of decoration and improvements, partly to comply with fire regulations. The school provides for 69 full-time and 37 part-time boys and girls between the ages of 2½ and 11 years. The intake is non-selective. The school aims for its pupils to gain places at the local grammar schools.

### **Summary of main findings**

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This is an effective school which provides a good quality of education for its pupils. The curriculum is broad, balanced and well planned. The teaching is good overall and never less than satisfactory. Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very good. The pupils are polite and excellently behaved. The school provides a safe and caring environment for its pupils within which they make good progress.

## What the school does well

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- it provides a friendly and homely environment where the pupils feel known and cared for;
- planning of the curriculum, schemes of work and individual lessons is very good;
- provision for the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development of the pupils is very good, and the pupils' behaviour is excellent;
- its pupils make good progress and are successful in gaining places in local maintained grammar schools; and
- relationships with parents are strong and mutually supportive.

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

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The school meets all the regulations.

### Next Steps

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

- increase opportunities for practical work across the curriculum by using the available space more flexibly; and
- extending the range of extra-curricular provision.

## Compliance with the regulations for registration

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

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#### The quality of the curriculum

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Curricular provision is good and meets all the requirements for registration and, despite some limitations, is generally broad and balanced. The curriculum for pupils in the nursery and reception classes is firmly based on the Foundation Stage early learning goals. Since the last nursery inspection in November 2003, more opportunities have been provided for practical tasks and activities aimed at the different levels of ability in these classes. The implementation of the action plan following the inspection is beginning to develop more effective monitoring procedures.

The curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2 broadly follows the National Curriculum (NC) including elements of the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy. Religious education (RE) is taught as a separate subject and makes a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual development. The continuity in provision for pupils from ages 5 to 11 enables them to make good progress. Documentation for the curriculum is comprehensive, detailed and effectively implemented. Policies and programmes of study include specific content, suggested teaching methods and assessment strategies. Teachers' planning is systematic, thorough and takes into account the range of ability in each class.

From Year 3, the curriculum is arranged according to NC subjects with the addition of French. The school has no specialist physical education (PE) facilities but all the pupils from Year 1 are taught swimming once a week in a local pool. The weekly PE curriculum is taught using the facilities in a neighbouring sports college. A policy for personal, social, and health education (PSHE) and citizenship has been drawn up. This scheme is carefully integrated into the assembly and tutorial time, as well as in the curriculum. This is supplemented by occasional lessons on specific matters such as sex and drugs education.

The special educational needs (SEN) co-ordinator implements the SEN Code of Practice and maintains the SEN register effectively. Pupils' special needs are identified quickly in the small classes and they receive individual attention as required.

The range of extra-curricular activities is limited but the school organises many visits to places of interest during school time to enrich the curriculum.

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

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The quality of teaching was good in more than half of the lessons observed and satisfactory in the remainder.

Lessons are well planned to meet the needs of all the pupils. In the better lessons, the plans are implemented in an interesting and lively fashion with a purposeful structure and challenging questions to stimulate the pupils to think for themselves. These lessons begin well, the objectives are understood by the pupils, tasks reflect the range of ability in each class and they end with a review of the main teaching points. All the teachers have high expectations of their pupils who respond by listening closely, asking thoughtful questions and producing good, carefully-presented written work. Class sizes are small and this enables the teachers to offer well-focused individual support. This is often supplemented by specialist resources. For example, Year 1 pupils use counting apparatus to improve their understanding of number bonds.

The small class sizes also enabled the teachers to know their pupils well. Relationships were open, friendly and supportive. Teachers work together in close co-operation to create a positive learning environment for the pupils.

Pupils are confident in relating and speaking to adults and ask sensible questions in class. Teachers can direct their approaches to the particular needs of individual pupils, who make good progress as a consequence. Pupils enjoy their lessons in all subjects. In a reception class lesson in science, pupils were particularly knowledgeable about nutritional matters. A Year 5 class was especially enthusiastic about poetry, being able to recite a number of poems by heart in a sensitive and expressive manner, showing feeling and understanding.

Clearly written policies on assessment, marking and report writing provide guidance to teachers whose marking is regular and full of praise. In some cases, however, teachers' marking did not provide sufficiently clear guidance to pupils on how to improve. The school does not use external

tests. Pupils' learning is continuously assessed by the teachers. The assessments are also used to monitor pupils' progress and identify areas for improvement, ensuring that all pupils make good progress at every stage. This provides information for parents on their children's progress at the end of every term. Over the past three years the school has enabled all Year 6 leavers to proceed to local maintained grammar schools.

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

Yes.

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

 **CONTENTS**

The school provides very well for the spiritual development of the pupils. Local clergy visit the school regularly to lead worship in assemblies. One such visit was observed during the inspection when a local vicar led the main school and nursery separately in a reflection on the harvest theme, involving the pupils appropriately. The response to the shared prayer and hymn was both devout and enthusiastic. The RE curriculum makes a significant contribution by introducing the pupils to sacred books of the major world faiths. In geography they learn about life in the developing world; and in English, they reflect on matters outside their own experience through the study of poetry.

The pupils' social and moral development is very good. Pupils develop a clear sense of right and wrong. The school is an orderly community where expectations of behaviour are high and the pupils respond accordingly. Consequently, pupils are generally polite to each other and courteous to adults; their behaviour is excellent. The PSHE programme introduces key moral issues at appropriate times and the older pupils are given opportunities to assume responsibility as prefects and house captains. Their broader social awareness is enhanced by visits from the police and representatives of community groups, including a former prime minister. They are regularly involved in raising money for worthy causes and the choir performs regularly in the community.

Pupil's cultural development is good and opportunities are provided to gain a knowledge and understanding of other cultures within the curriculum, particularly in RE, music, art and English. This is reinforced by attractive wall displays illustrating life in different parts of the world.

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

Yes.

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

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

 **CONTENTS**

The school meets the requirements for registration pertaining to the welfare, health and safety of the pupils. A series of comprehensive and well-written documents provide information and guidance to the staff who implement these policies effectively. Rare incidents of bullying are logged, fire drill records are up-to-date and thorough risk assessments are carried out on all trips away from the school. The First Aid policy was seen to be applied by one of the school's two First Aiders in the case of a pupil with minor bruising.

The comprehensive behaviour policy contains appropriate rewards and sanctions as well as a summary of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) guidance on physical restraint outlining the respective roles of the senior staff and class teachers. The pupils' behaviour in and around the school is excellent. They accrue points for good work and behaviour and these are celebrated in assemblies each week in the house competition. Arrangements for the supervision of pupils on and off the school premises are very thorough and effective, not only serving their safety but also promoting good behaviour.

The admission register is up-to-date and registration of pupils is undertaken assiduously. Attendance rates are very high and no unauthorised absence is recorded. The Viking School is a safe and healthy environment.

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

Yes.

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

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For just over three years, the school has been in the ownership of the present proprietor, formerly a long-serving teacher at the school. The day-to-day running of the school is managed by the headteacher. The school ensures that the staff are suitably checked to work with children. Checks by the Criminal Records Bureau are contracted out to the local education authority and effective checks take place on the employment history, qualifications and health of staff recruited to the school. Similar checks are made on those parents who provide classroom assistance.

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

Yes.

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

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The school is housed in a converted, detached, residential property on a housing estate close to Skegness town centre. Although the nature of the building imposes some limitations and constraints on its use as a school, it meets the regulations relating to premises and accommodation.

The classrooms are situated on two floors in the main house with a small library on the second floor. Two prefabricated buildings in the school grounds accommodate the nursery and Year 6. A hall provides sufficient space for whole school assemblies, school dinners, music and movement. Outside, a small yard provides sufficient space for the pupils to play safely. PE and swimming lessons are taken by the whole school in the nearby sports college and leisure centre respectively.

There is sufficient space to accommodate current numbers but two classrooms are too small to allow sufficient room for practical work. The school should review the allocation of space for practical work.

The Proprietor/Principal has undertaken a significant programme of improvements and decoration over the last three years to create a bright, pleasant and safe environment. The buildings are clean and well-maintained. Attractive displays of pupils' work and artefacts create an interesting

environment for their learning.

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

Yes.

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

 **CONTENTS**

The school meets all the requirements for the provision of information for parents. The prospectus, open days and information evenings provide current and prospective parents with clear information about the school's work. Communication between school and home is good, regular and mutually supportive. There is daily contact between the staff and the parents. Most parents are happy about the information they receive from the school and feel welcome there. Many support the school by participating in various activities.

Reports on pupils' attainment and progress along with targets for their further progress are received by parents each term. Parents are kept informed about the topics to be studied and regular homework in all years involves them in their children's learning. All the parents who replied to the questionnaire were pleased with the progress their children make.

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

Yes.

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

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The school has a clearly written policy for handling complaints, which fully meets the regulations. Opportunities exist for complaints to be made on an informal basis initially. There are formal procedures to enable unresolved complaints to be considered fairly and objectively. Most parents understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints and feel comfortable approaching the school with questions, suggestions or problems.

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

Yes.

**School details**

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Name of school:	The Viking School
DfES ref number:	925/6033
Type of school:	Preparatory
Status:	Independent

Age range of pupils:	2 ½ - 11 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 32,	Girls 37,	Total 69
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys 16,	Girls 21,	Total 37
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 0,	Girls 1,	Total 1
Annual fees (day pupils):	£3,339		
Address of school:	140 Church Road North Skegness Lincolnshire PE25 2QJ		
Telephone number:	01754 765749		
Headteacher:	Mrs A Beard		
Proprietor:	Mrs S Barker		
Lead Inspector:	Mr T Kilbride		
Dates of inspection:	20 - 23 September 2004		

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