

The Gower School

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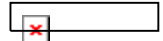
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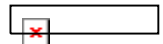
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Introduction and summary

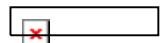


Purpose and scope of the inspection



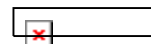
This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school



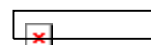
The Gower School is an independent day school situated in Islington, North London. It originally opened as a day nursery and is inspected by Ofsted Early Years. It has gradually expanded so that it now has 102 pupils up to compulsory school age on roll. Twenty-four of these pupils are funded through the government's Nursery Scheme. Much of the education provided is based on the Montessori philosophy, which is now being extended through to the reception year. In September 2004 the school began to admit pupils of compulsory school age and there are now 10 pupils who attend full-time. It has been owned by the present proprietor since it opened in September 2000. Admission is after interviews with prospective parents and pupils. At present there is one pupil who has a statement of special educational need (SEN). There are two pupils who are learning English as an additional language. The school believes that 'every child is special' and aims to 'provide the space and encouragement for children to grow and flourish into happy individuals who are ready to learn'. Consequently it places a strong emphasis on the arts and music.

Summary of main findings



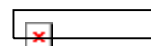
The Gower School provides a sound education for its pupils especially those with SEN. It is a caring and happy school where its staff and pupils, who are from many different cultures and beliefs, work in an atmosphere of total harmony and mutual respect. Pupils develop a high level of self-esteem and are very confident when talking to adults within the school. The quality of teaching is good in the nursery and satisfactory in the reception year and Key Stage 1. The curriculum is broad and relevant to pupils' needs although it is in its early stages of development and formal assessment procedures are not yet in place for pupils in Key Stage 1. The Foundation Stage curriculum is firmly based on Montessori methodology and is linked very well to the areas of learning. This gives pupils a good start to their education.

What the school does well



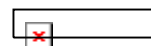
- it provides pupils in the nursery with a very good foundation for learning;
- it makes very good provision for pupils' personal, moral, social and cultural development;
- it supports and includes pupils with SEN very successfully;
- it is very well organised on a day-to-day basis;
- it develops and maintains very good relationships at all levels; and
- it provides good resources and accommodation for learning.

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



- meet the requirements regarding the implementation of formal assessment procedures as outlined in section 1 of this report; and
- ensure that the prospectus includes details of pupils' academic performance as appropriate as noted in section 6.

Next steps



Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- continue to develop schemes of work so that pupils' skills are developed systematically; and
- develop assessment procedures that are linked to the schemes of work so that pupils' progress can be monitored closely in all subjects.

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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The school provides a satisfactory curriculum that is broad and reasonably well balanced. It enables pupils to develop their knowledge effectively in all subjects of the National Curriculum. Skills are less well developed in design and technology. Current planning ensures that all pupils learn and make progress but the curriculum does not yet provide a clear sequential development of skills that enables pupils with different levels of attainment to be challenged at the appropriate level especially the more able. When schemes of work are fully developed they should help to ensure the progression and continuity of pupils' learning in all subjects and enable work to be matched more appropriately to individual pupils' needs. One of the school's strengths is the full inclusion in the day-to-day life of the school of pupils who have SEN. Teachers ensure that they are fully integrated into classroom life, for example by asking them questions at an appropriate level.

In the nursery the school links the Montessori methodology with the Foundation Stage curriculum very effectively and pupils make good progress. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, the National Curriculum and other curriculum guidance are being used sensibly to plan work in the reception year and in Years 1 and 2. This is helping to ensure the smooth transition from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1. There are computers in both the reception class and in the Year 1/2 class which are used regularly to support pupils' learning. The school places strong emphasis on the creative arts and each class has at least two music lessons a week. Weekly swimming lessons take place at a nearby pool and all pupils visit the local library regularly.

The school gives high priority to pupils' personal development through its good provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE). Circle time or an assembly take place every day. Parents are invited to the circle time lesson on Fridays and this helps to keep them fully involved in their children's education. A wide range of educational visits such as those to the theatre, local shops and the fire station further extends the curriculum.

The quality of the teaching and assessment

☐

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and some of it is good. Lesson planning is satisfactory, overall, and enables most pupils to make progress. However, it sometimes lacks clear aims as to what pupils at different levels are expected to achieve by the end of the lesson. In the more successful lessons there is a clear progression in the development of skills, for example in a science lesson about hot and cold climates in the reception class. Teachers make use of a satisfactory range of teaching strategies such as demonstration and direct instruction and encourage pupils to think and learn for themselves. Questioning, whilst used consistently, is often too closed and this does not allow pupils to expand their ideas. Teachers often use practical

activities sensibly to enhance pupils understanding such as in science and music in Years 1 and 2. Weaknesses occur when lessons do not have clear aims and when pupils with different abilities, especially the more able, are not challenged appropriately.

Pupils in the nursery are taught well. Teachers use the Montessori methods very confidently and pupils rapidly gain confidence in learning and developing new ideas. Teachers have a thorough understanding of what these pupils are expected to achieve and there is a very good balance of teacher- and pupil-led activities. Planning is detailed and is firmly linked to the areas of learning outlined in the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority Foundation Stage curriculum guidance.

Teachers and their assistants know their pupils very well and relationships are trusting and friendly. Pupils enjoy learning and benefit from the high ratio of adults to pupils, often having good one-to-one support. They work hard and their behaviour is very good. This contributes to the positive learning atmosphere throughout the school. Pupils know that their teachers care about them and this helps to develop their self-confidence and self-esteem. They begin to develop independent learning skills, for example by selecting appropriate resources and returning them when their work is complete. Resources throughout the school are good and are used effectively by teachers to enhance pupils' learning.

The school only started to admit pupils of compulsory school age last term and it has not yet developed effective assessment procedures for pupils in Key Stage 1. Although pupil numbers are very low and all teachers know the pupils well they do not record their achievements formally. Consequently teachers are not able to track their pupils' progress carefully enough or to set appropriate targets for those with different levels of ability. The school now needs to extend the good assessment procedures that have been developed in the nursery throughout Key Stage 1. The school is fully aware of this and the development of assessment procedures has a high priority on its self-evaluation audit.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

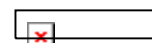
No.

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:

- further develop the curriculum so that the schemes of work enable all pupils to learn and make progress (paragraph (2)(i));
- ensure that there is a framework in place to assess pupils' work regularly and use this information to plan teaching so that all pupils make progress at the appropriate rate (paragraph 1(3)(g)); and
- evaluate pupils' progress both in terms of their personal development and against national norms when they are available (paragraph 1(4)).
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2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils



Provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is very good. It is good for their spiritual development. A warm and friendly ethos pervades the school and pupils feel safe and happy. A strength of the school is the way in which pupils quickly develop their confidence and self-esteem. They play and work collaboratively and are confident when talking to each other and to adults. Their spiritual awareness is raised through circle times and assemblies, for example, when they thoughtfully discussed peoples' feelings about the recent tsunami in the Indian Ocean. However,

planned opportunities to raise pupils' spiritual awareness of the world around them are missed in lessons such as art and music.

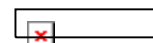
Pupils clearly know the difference between right and wrong. Staff provide positive role models and deal quickly with any misdemeanours. The school policy on good behaviour encourages pupils to behave sensibly and considerately around the school. The high ratio of adults to pupils contributes to the positive atmosphere throughout the school. Relationships at all levels are very good. Pupils relate well to each other and to their teachers. All contribute to the happy and welcoming atmosphere that is instantly noticeable when one enters the school. Parents report that any concerns are always dealt with sensitively. They are always made to feel that their contribution to the school and their children's education is important.

The school provides a very good example of a multi-cultural society. Both staff and pupils represent many different faiths and cultures. They work together in total harmony, setting a very good example of mutual respect both within the school and to all visitors. They celebrate a wide range of festivals and traditions from these many faiths, for example Christmas and Divali.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



The school makes very good provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety and nurtures them carefully. All the appropriate policies are in place and very good behaviour is encouraged at all times. Pupils report that any instances of unacceptable behaviour are dealt with swiftly by staff. All adults in the school are alert to issues of child abuse and the headteacher is the named child protection officer. The school places great importance on pupils' welfare and safety on school visits. There is a detailed risk assessment before every visit which takes account of national guidelines.

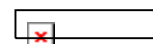
The school maintains a very detailed accident book. There are 12 qualified First Aiders on the staff and the school is funding further training for all staff. Regular fire drills are carried out and the school meets the fire safety regulations.

Pupils are closely supervised whilst on the school premises. Attendance is good. Admission and attendance registers are kept according to current regulations.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff



The headteacher is the sole proprietor and opened the school to pupils of compulsory school age in September 2004. In Key Stage 1 there are two full-time teachers both of whom are recently qualified. In the nursery there are 11 teachers supported by 12 full-time equivalent assistants.

The headteacher has implemented effective procedures for the appointment of staff which include

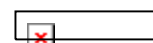
all the necessary checks. All adults who come into contact with pupils have been cleared to work with them through the appropriate channels.

The school is at present working hard to achieve the Islington Quality Kite-mark for provision and has only three modules to complete.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



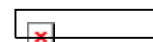
The premises and accommodation are in a large two story building and are entirely suitable for their purpose. As the school is growing, space is at a premium and the proprietor is seeking new premises to meet the need of the increasing numbers on roll, especially those of compulsory school age.

Classes for some pupils in the Foundation Stage and for all those in Key Stage 1 are on the first floor. Pupils are very well supervised whilst going up and down the stairs and they manage them confidently. Classrooms are maintained well and are of a good standard both in fabric and décor. They are enhanced by attractive displays of the pupils' work. Outdoor play space is limited to a hard play area. The school staggers play times and this ensures that the space is adequate for the numbers of pupils. This area is well-equipped and attractive. It provides good play opportunities for the pupils. There are sufficient large toys for the pupils in the Foundation Stage which they can use on the playground during normal lesson times. Although there is no specifically designated room for pupils who are ill, there are a number of suitable locations near to a sink and toilet which can be used if required.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The quality of information for parents is satisfactory. The prospectus clearly outlines the school's aims and admission procedures and provides a good overall view of the curriculum. Informative reports are sent home twice a year followed by two meetings for parents where they can discuss their children's progress formally. However, parents are welcome to discuss any concerns with staff at any time. Parents are also invited to one 'circle time' lesson a week, which they find helpful. Reports do not yet include particulars of pupils' academic performance because the school is new and there are no statistics available.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

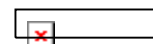
The school meets all but one of the requirements.

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:

- include particulars of pupils' academic performance in its prospectus as soon as they are available (paragraph 6(2)(i)).

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

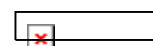


The school's procedures for handling complaints are clear and effective and fully meet the regulations. They are available in the school office for parents and prospective parents to see at any reasonable time. A number of parents who responded to the questionnaire were unaware of these procedures. The school now plans to send a copy to all parents.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details



Name of school:	The Gower School		
DfES ref number:	206/6381		
Type of school:	Nursery and Primary		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	3 months - 7 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 9,	Girls 1,	Total 10
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 1,	Girls 0,	Total 1
Annual fees (day pupils):	£6,142		
Address of school:	18 North Road		
	Islington		
	London		
	N7 9EY		
E-mail address:	TheGowerSchool@aol.com		
Telephone number:	020 7700 2445		
Fax number:	020 7609 1119		
Headteacher:	Miss Emma Gowers		
Proprietor:	Miss Emma Gowers		
Lead Inspector:	Mr D C Houghton		
Dates of inspection:	10 - 13 January 2005		
