

## Downsend School - Epsom Lodge

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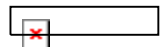
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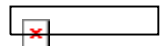
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#### **Introduction and summary**

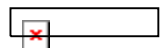


#### **Purpose and scope of the inspection**



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.

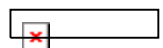
#### **Information about the school**



Downsend School - Epsom Lodge is a non-selective pre-preparatory school for boys and girls aged from two and a half to six years old. It is part of the Downsend group of four schools owned by Cognita Schools Ltd, and is located in the residential area of Epsom in Surrey. The school is organised into four departments: the nursery for the two and a half year-olds and three, the kindergarten for those aged three to four, the transition classes, for the four to five year-olds and Year 1 for the five and six year-olds. At the time of the inspection there were 119 pupils on roll.

The school aims to 'provide a broad and balanced curriculum in which all children have opportunities to succeed as individuals; to extend all children and at the same time provide necessary support for those with any special need.' It prides itself in creating a family atmosphere, and gives a high priority to developing positive links with parents. On leaving Epsom Lodge, most pupils go on to Downsend Preparatory School in Leatherhead.

#### **Summary of main findings**



This is a well-organised school with many positive features. It offers an attractive and colourful

learning environment. All pupils are valued as individuals, and a high priority is given to their personal as well as academic development. The curriculum, which is very well planned and supported by a range of after-school clubs and facilities, is broad and balanced.

The quality of the teaching is usually good or very good, and the pupils make very good progress by the end of Year 1. There are excellent relationships between the school, its parents and the pupils.

### What the school does well

- it provides an attractive, well-organised learning environment;
- it fosters excellent relationships with parents;
- its curriculum is very well matched to pupils' needs;
- it assesses pupils' progress very effectively;
- it makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; and
- it provides good teaching.

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

The school complies fully with the regulations.

### Next steps

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

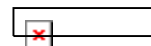
- review the use of worksheets; and
- set learning targets for pupils.

### Compliance with the regulations for registration

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

## The quality of the curriculum



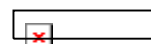
Very good curriculum planning is a distinctive feature of the school. The curriculum is broad and balanced, and it promotes progression and continuity in pupils' learning. The six areas of learning of the Foundation Stage and the subjects of Key Stage 1 of the National Curriculum are taught to the appropriate age groups. French is taught to all pupils, with specialist provision in kindergarten, transition and Year 1. There is also specialist provision for the teaching of music, dance and drama for all age groups. Good use is made of visits and visitors, including parents, to enrich the quality of the curriculum. After school clubs include football, judo, dance, art and craft.

Teachers' planning is very good. Particularly effective links exist between the school's curriculum policy, schemes of work, and teachers' weekly and daily planning. Planning is detailed and uses National Curriculum and other guidance to ensure that the lessons are focused on clear objectives, and build upon what has been previously learned. In addition, curriculum provision is supported by a range of published schemes. These are often accompanied by worksheets which are, on occasions, overused.

Knowledge, skills, and understanding are planned appropriately through structured play and topic work, or in lessons focussed on discrete subjects. The curriculum policy identifies the importance of providing increasing challenge for pupils where topics may be revisited in subsequent years. There are also good policies and provision for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE), with well-planned class lessons, whole-school and year group assemblies.

Planning for pupils' development in the key areas of speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy is thorough and takes into account individual needs. Although there are no pupils with statements of special educational need currently on roll, the school follows the Code of Practice and provides appropriate additional support for pupils with learning difficulties.

## The quality of the teaching and assessment



The quality of the teaching is mostly good, and is sometimes very good. Lessons are well planned, and draw upon good quality long- and medium-term planning. The content of all of the lessons is suitable for the age range of the pupils taught. The teachers are confident in what they have to teach, and have clear expectations of what they want pupils to achieve. Good whole-class teaching is provided followed by an appropriate level of support for the pupils, individually, or in pairs or small groups. The younger pupils are taught in a well-structured learning environment with a purposeful working atmosphere. Good use is made of teaching assistants.

The teaching is lively, resources are good and the vast majority of the pupils are motivated and interested in their work. Good attention is given to teaching the basic skills of numeracy and literacy and the pupils make very good progress by the end of Year 1. The pupils are well known by their teachers, and classrooms are organised efficiently and have good quality displays.

In a minority of the lessons teachers spend too much time dealing with pupils who call out and disrupt the flow of teaching and learning. Similarly in these lessons, there are instances of inattentiveness which take up too much of the teachers' time. In the other lessons, which are often good or very good, and on occasions, excellent, such behaviour is not tolerated. The teachers insist that pupils wait their turn in order to make a contribution to the lesson. The teaching is tightly focused, the pace of the lesson brisk, and the pupils motivated, involved and interested. Teachers' questioning of the pupils is probing and challenging, and they have high expectations of both

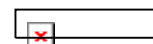
behaviour and achievement. The pupils are also encouraged to contribute their own ideas and suggestions.

The school is currently developing a very effective framework for the assessment of the pupils' progress. Very good strategies have recently been put in place for the monitoring, recording and assessment of the pupils' progress. On-going assessment is part of the daily routine, and observations and comments are collated and contribute to individual pupil profiles. These profiles follow the pupils up through the school, building a picture of their progress and achievement across the four stages of their pre-preparatory learning. The profiles are supplemented further with Foundation Stage Profiles, assessments using National Curriculum level descriptions, the results of various class and standardized tests, and copies of written reports to parents. Marking is consistent and thorough, with some excellent examples of helpful comments which assist pupils in improving their work.

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

Yes.

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



The school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development. There are daily assemblies for all pupils of compulsory school age. These are very well planned and are linked closely with the programme for the teaching of PSHE. In addition to dealing with personal as well as wider community and world issues, the assemblies include prayers, hymns, and celebrations of Christian and other festivals as well as consideration of those who are less fortunate.

Pupils are taught the difference between right and wrong. The importance of developing good relationships, including tolerance and respect for one another, is strongly emphasised in a clearly written behaviour policy. Teachers and other adults are given clear guidance on the importance of maintaining and developing appropriate behaviour as well as how to handle that which is considered to be unacceptable. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on how their actions can have consequences for others. Assemblies celebrate the work and good behaviour of individuals or groups.

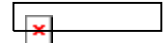
The development of pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence is given a high priority and they are taught to express positive qualities about themselves and others. This is reinforced in the planning of the PSHE programme and assemblies, and is one of the main aims outlined in the behaviour policy. Pupils are given opportunities to contribute to assemblies and to take part in various celebrations and performances, some of which are attended by parents. They take it in turns to be appointed as 'class leader' for the day and older pupils are encouraged to care for their younger peers. There are also opportunities for the pupils to take part in a number of fund raising and charitable events. For example, they raise money for disabled children as well as collect food parcels and presents for the elderly and other deserving causes within the community.

Pupils' cultural development is nurtured through aspects of the curriculum including dance, literature, music and assemblies. There are visits by theatre groups, as well as visits to museums, art galleries and other places of educational interest. Parents and other adults come to the school to talk about their occupations or aspects of their culture. A primary objective in the school's equal opportunities policy is to educate and develop all pupils, irrespective of cultural background. To this end, the curriculum provides for pupils to learn about world faiths other than their own. They are taught, for example, about Hanukkah, the Qu'ran and the Chinese New Year.

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

Yes.

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



Pupils are well cared for in all aspects of their schooling. Teachers know them as individuals and work hard to meet their academic and social needs. School routines are securely established and contribute to an orderly and harmonious environment. The staff are aware of their responsibilities, and clear written policies guide their actions in the event of an emergency, whether at school or on an educational visit. Staff are made aware of pupils with particular conditions or allergies. There are seven members of staff who have current First-Aid qualifications. The school office ensures that it has the necessary information to contact parents during the school day. Pupils know that the adults in the school are there to help them should they feel anxious or unhappy. This is reinforced in the carefully planned programme for PSHE and in whole-school assemblies.

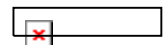
There are relevant policies for the protection of pupils concerning bullying, child abuse, and their general welfare, health and safety. The school also maintains appropriate log books, for example, for the testing of fire alarms and the recording of illnesses and accidents. A fire-risk assessment was carried out in June 2004 and a number of recommended actions have been carried out recently. Attendance and admission registers are in place and kept up-to-date.

Careful consideration has been given to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002. The school development plan identifies a number of areas for action, for example, installing a ramp in order to improve access for those with disabilities.

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

Yes.

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



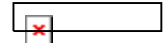
The headteacher and staff are suitably qualified and offer a wide range of experience and expertise. The school is very effectively organised by the headteacher with the support of an efficiently run office.

All adults involved in the running of the school have been checked with the Criminal Records Bureau in order to confirm their suitability to work with children. Clear procedures are in place to check the previous employment and medical history, as well as the character and professional qualifications, of prospective staff prior to their appointment.

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

Yes.

## 5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



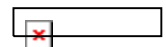
The school buildings are suitable for their purpose, and provide a very good teaching and learning environment for young pupils. They occupy an attractive site comprising two adjoining detached houses, and both grassed and hard-surfaced outdoor play areas. The accommodation, including the toilets and hand-washing facilities, is well-furnished and clean. Classrooms are adequate in size and well organised. They each contain a good range of resources including a computer. Good use is made of the small school hall for physical education, dance, assemblies and lunches.

There is very good provision for outdoor play, including climbing equipment with a safety surface beneath. All portable equipment is carefully stored and labelled for ease of access. There is a small playing field which is also used for football. Older pupils make use of the swimming pool at Downsend School every week. A garden area contains a small weather station. There are markings on the hard-surfaced play area to help consolidate pupils' early counting skills. A good range of small play equipment is used by the pupils at break and lunch times.

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

Yes.

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



The comprehensive range of information provided for parents is of very good quality. This was confirmed by the very positive response from parents to the pre-inspection questionnaire. Almost all of those that replied reported that they are kept well informed about their children's progress and feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or problems.

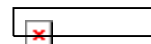
Every prospective parent is given an informative brochure of very good quality, which gives an overview of all four schools in the Downsend group. In addition, each new parent receives an information pack and a handbook for Epsom Lodge. A particularly strong feature of these documents is the curriculum information, which includes general statements outlining the school's aims, philosophy and coverage. There are twice-yearly curriculum meetings, booklets for each year group detailing the work planned, and the class topics. Parent-teacher interviews take place twice a year and written reports on pupils' progress are issued in the autumn and summer terms. Other, more general, information is made available through, for example, a website and weekly newsletters.

Some of the parents are involved in the work of the school. For example, there are parent representatives for each class, and parental help with road safety and school visits. Extended facilities are in place for pupils at the beginning and the end of the school day, as well as creative workshops involving both parents and their children. Parents are invited to coffee mornings, special assemblies and performances. There is also a very active parents' association which organises social and fundraising events.

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

Yes.

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

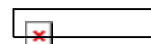


The written complaints procedure is clear and comprehensive. Procedures to be followed in the event of an informal or formal complaint, including time scales, are explained. Confidentiality is guaranteed. Provision is also included for the establishment of a hearing before a panel, should parents not be satisfied with the response to a written complaint. A copy of the procedures is included in the parents' information pack.

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

Yes.

## School details



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Name of school:	Downsend School - Epsom Lodge		
DfES ref number:	936/6199		
Type of school:	Pre-preparatory		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	2 - 6 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 31,	Girls 27,	Total 58
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys 33,	Girls 28,	Total 61
Annual fees (day pupils):	£1,740 - £6,825		
Address of school:	6 Norman Avenue Epsom Surrey KT17 3AB		
E-mail address:	epsomlodge@downsend.co.uk		
Telephone number:	01372 721824		
Fax number:	01372 721824		
Headteacher:	Mrs Sarah Jane Matthews		
Proprietor:	Cognita Schools Ltd		
Lead Inspector:	Mr Ken Morgan		
Dates of inspection:	18 - 21 April 2005		