

The Fulham Prep School Limited

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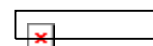
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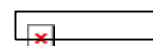
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Introduction and summary

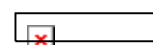


Purpose and scope of the inspection



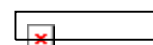
This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school



Fulham Prep School was founded in 1996, near Putney Bridge in London, by the present headmistress. It is a co-educational preparatory school for pupils aged from 4 to 13. With growing pupil numbers, the school acquired additional premises in Hammersmith in 2003. There are now 385 pupils on roll, mainly from the local area. Pupils in the pre-preparatory department (aged four to seven) are mainly taught by their class teacher. Preparatory department lessons are taught by subject specialists. The school curriculum is broadly based on the National Curriculum and teachers *"seek to create a challenging, happy and disciplined learning environment within which children can achieve their potential."* Pupils are prepared for senior school examinations at 11+ and 13+. *"Special importance is put on the acquisition of traditional basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy."*

Summary of main findings



The majority of teaching is good. In the pre-preparatory department, pupils benefit from a caring environment in which they are given individual support and a good grounding in basic skills. In the preparatory department, specialist teaching and a very broad curriculum enable pupils to make progress. Standards of attainment are very good by the end of Key Stage 1 and almost all pupils go on to achieve entrance to the secondary school of their choice. Both premises are well maintained and offer a good standard of accommodation.

What the school does well

- it provides a very broad, well-balanced and enriched curriculum;
- it encourages very good pupil behaviour;
- it provides very good opportunities for moral and social development; and
- it fosters good relationships between pupils and teachers.

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

- maintain admission registers in the required format, noted in section 3;
- carry out the necessary checks on staff as detailed in section 4; and
- provide the information required in section 6 of this report.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The breadth of the curriculum is a strength of the school. The school's main aim to prepare children for examinations at 11+ and 13+ is fulfilled with a curriculum reflecting the National Curriculum and requirements of the Independent Schools Examination Board. The exceptionally broad and well-balanced curriculum includes all the core and foundation subjects supplemented by sport, religious education (RE), French from Year R, Latin from Year 5 and philosophy in Key Stage 2. There is specialist teaching in all subjects from Year 4, and also in some subjects for younger pupils. The curriculum is further enhanced by very good extra-curricular provision, residential and educational visits.

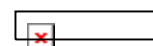
There is effective provision for pupils to learn and make progress, with a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy. The curriculum is well planned, especially in the preparatory department. Extensive handbooks for each subject include long- and short-term plans, resources, monitoring and assessment procedures, targets, and examination results. These are useful for teachers but contain limited guidance on teaching methods and approaches, for example on the use of computers in lessons. There are regular monitoring reviews in each subject which focus on general aspects as well as children's progress and provide a basis for further development. Although there are no pupils with a statement of special educational need, the school does operate the Code of Practice.

The school affords varied sporting and musical opportunities. About half the pupils are learning to play a musical instrument. There are three choirs, including a chamber choir which has performed at various venues, including Trafalgar Square. Each year there are several school productions involving different year groups. At the time of the inspection rehearsals were taking place for an ambitious production of *The Mikado*. Pupils are coached in games including rugby, football, cricket, tennis, netball and hockey, with opportunities for individual sports such as fencing. There are regular fixtures against other schools, as well as optional sports on a Saturday morning.

The very good range of regular extra-curricular activities includes music, chess, bridge, dance and drama. Over 95% of parents who responded to the questionnaire reported their satisfaction with this provision. The curriculum is enriched with many worthwhile educational visits, for example to museums, theatres, art galleries, and an environmental centre, making good use of London's facilities. Book weeks are organised and recently an innovative week of arts and music was enjoyed across the school. Parents also contributed to this and pupils in the preparatory department produced a collage depicting *The Moldau* by Smetana, with contributions from visiting artists. Activities of this kind make a very positive contribution to the enhancement and extension of the curriculum.

Personal social and health education (PSHE) is taught through a planned syllabus in the pre-preparatory department and subsequently in a less formally structured programme in 'form time' and in some lessons such as science and philosophy. Citizenship is taught in some years in Key Stage 2, supported by a programme of visiting speakers. Careful advice is given to pupils and their parents about secondary school choices.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



The standard of teaching is generally good. Some very good and excellent lessons were seen as well as a very small amount of teaching which was not effective. In most lessons pupils are making progress and often achieving well.

Throughout the pre-preparatory department teachers ensure that pupils make good progress in the basic skills of speaking and listening, reading, writing and numeracy. By the time the pupils are ready to transfer at the end of Year 2 their attainment is very good. Lessons have an effective balance between practical activities and written recording. There is a consistent approach to the teaching of handwriting which is well modelled by the teachers. Pupils work well in groups and as a whole class, whilst individual work allows teachers to make frequent assessments of progress. The new assessment systems in pre-preparatory are beginning to provide useful information about pupils' progress and achievements.

Classrooms in both departments are attractive and colourful. There is a wide range of pupils' work displayed on walls and in the corridors. Their effort and achievements are valued by teachers, consequently pupils have a positive attitude towards work and their written presentation is usually of a high order.

In the preparatory department, subjects are taught by specialist teachers from Year 4 onwards and often in specialist rooms. The pupils benefit from the teachers' subject knowledge and access to specific resources. Teachers' lesson plans always show a learning intention and this is often shared with the pupils. Lessons conclude with a brief recap of the main points and this helps pupils to remember what they have learned. Many good lessons started with a reminder about previous learning to prepare pupils for the new material. Questioning is used to check factual knowledge but less effectively to probe understanding or to give pupils the opportunity to explain their reasoning. The relatively short thirty-five minute allocation for single lessons sometimes hinders discussion and the development of teaching points.

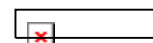
Staff training on the needs of individual pupils has recently been undertaken. Good suggestions have been drawn up by each head of department for extending the challenge presented to some pupils, and offering better ways of supporting those who are finding it more difficult to keep up. These strategies are not yet fully effective in lessons, consequently some pupils feel that the work is insufficiently demanding. The arrangements for supporting pupils with special educational needs have been carefully considered and one-to-one help is available through specialist teaching. Individual education plans are drawn up and there is frequent liaison with parents. A small minority of parents have not been fully satisfied with these arrangements.

Assessments are regularly carried out by the teachers to check on pupils' progress. Information is carefully recorded but not always used in preparing further work for pupils. Most work is conscientiously marked by teachers and guidance is sometimes given on how pupils could improve their work. School leadership is clearly focussed on developing strategies for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in order to secure continuous improvement.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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



Provision for moral and social development is a significant strength. Spiritual and cultural development are both good, although multi-cultural aspects of life in modern Britain are not as well represented in the curriculum. Self-confidence is strongly encouraged but opportunities for independence and initiative are not as well developed in lessons as other aspects of personal awareness and social interaction. The pupils are courteous and very polite; they engage freely and articulately in conversation with adults. As a mark of confidence in their social abilities, pupils show prospective parents around the school.

Behaviour in lessons and at playtimes is very good. There are many opportunities for the pupils to take responsibility and develop a sense of community. From the reception year onwards classroom tasks are shared out and pupils begin to understand how they contribute to community life. A system for rewarding good behaviour operates effectively throughout the school. Class discussions and the PSHE programme are used to promote a sense of personal awareness and provide opportunities to talk about moral, social and healthy-living issues. Individual responsibility is constantly promoted and at the highest level is exercised by captains and vice-captains of houses, prefects, and the head boy and head girl.

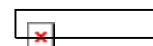
Assemblies and RE lessons provide opportunities for spiritual reflection which is also developed occasionally through art and music. Although most of the RE teaching is based on the Christian tradition pupils acquire an understanding of religious tolerance and some knowledge of other beliefs and customs. Cultural aspects of life are well developed in parts of the curriculum but there is insufficient attention given to non-European cultures. Pupils acquire a good understanding of society and public institutions. The recent general election activities in the preparatory department

are a good example of engagement in current affairs.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



Provision for the welfare and care of pupils is good. There is a broad range of detailed policies for the promotion of good behaviour and healthy living. These documents take full account of the required guidelines and have a beneficial influence on daily life in the school. Pupils frequently commented on their positive relationships with teachers and they also get on well with each other. This contributes to the friendly, working atmosphere. The school environment is one in which pupils feel safe and well looked-after.

Pupils are well supervised at all times on the school premises. Child protection and safety receive a high priority around the school and on educational trips and visits. Proper risk assessments are undertaken for all activities. Fire drills are held frequently and appliances are regularly tested. There are school nurses in full-time attendance on both sites and due attention is given to all First Aid requirements. Some of the attendance registers are not kept in full accord with regulations. A plan has been prepared with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and most of the school already has full accessibility.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

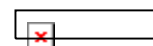
It meets all but one of the requirements.

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:

- maintain attendance registers 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 a limited company. Almost all staff are graduates and many have teaching qualifications. There are evolving procedures for the recruitment of teaching and non-teaching staff, but currently these do not fully meet the requirements of the regulations. Although the school has applied for criminal record checks for all staff, many are not yet properly completed. There are no procedures in place to check the medical fitness of successful applicants prior to the confirmation of their appointment. Records of references are now kept but this has not always been the case.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

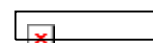
No.

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 checks with the Criminal Records Bureau are carried out on all members of staff to confirm their suitability (paragraph 4(b)); and
- ensure that there are procedures in place to check the medical fitness and previous employment history of successful applicants prior to the confirmation of their appointment (paragraph 4(c)).

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The school is accommodated on two sites about a mile apart. The original site, close to Putney Bridge, is an old Victorian school building which has been skilfully extended to provide sufficient space for the pre-preparatory department. The other site in Hammersmith is a former school which provides good facilities for the older pupils. Both sites have adequate hard-surfaced playground facilities.

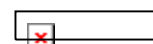
There are sufficient classrooms of an adequate size on both sites, often enhanced by good displays of pupils' work. Both sites have a library, art room, hall, and well-resourced room for information and communication technology with networked modern computers. In the preparatory department there are specialist facilities for all subjects, including laboratories for science and a well-equipped room for design technology.

Facilities in local parks and Fulham swimming pool are also used for sports. The preparatory department has an all-weather surface for games such as football, hockey and cricket. Each site has a separate dining area and the preparatory department has a kitchen which supplies hot and cold healthy meals for both sites.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The school produces an attractive prospectus which conveys its nature and ethos. This provides information about the way the school aims to prepare pupils for entrance examinations to secondary schools. Insertions within the prospectus ensure that parents and prospective parents have information which is up-to-date, including a full list of staff and the results of entrance examinations. Parents are informed of some, but not all, of the policies which are available.

There are helpful handbooks for parents giving information about each year group. A particularly strong feature is the clear and readable information on the curriculum in addition to the timetable and, from Year 3 onwards, a recommended reading list for pupils. Regular newsletters are produced by both departments during the term.

Reports are issued at the end of the autumn and summer terms. These are supported by assessments of pupils' achievement, effort and attitude each half term. The reports are clear and

detailed, with information on pupils' academic progress and personal development. There are annual formal consultation sessions where parents may discuss their child's progress. Applications to secondary schools are discussed with the parents of older children. Meetings can also be arranged with teachers after school by appointment.

About half the parents responded to the questionnaire, revealing a high level of satisfaction with the school. Communication between parents and the school is good, though a small minority do not feel comfortable with approaching the school about problems.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

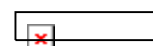
The school meets almost all the requirements.

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

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

- provide to parents and prospective parents particulars of the school's policy on exclusions (paragraph 6(2)(e));
- publish to parents and prospective parents the availability of policies on bullying, child protection, health and safety, behaviour and sanctions (paragraph 6(2)(h)); and
- publish to parents and prospective parents the availability of its complaints procedure (paragraph 6(2)(j)).

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

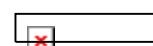


On the questionnaire a few parents said they were unaware that there is a complaints procedure. A procedure has recently been devised and this meets all requirements. The school nevertheless needs to ensure that complaints are resolved within the timescales stated in the procedures.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details



| | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Name of school: | The Fulham Prep School Limited |
| DfES ref number: | 205/6390 |
| Type of school: | Preparatory and pre-preparatory |
| Status: | Independent |
| Age range of pupils: | 4-13 years |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| Number on roll (full-time pupils): | Boys 225, Girls 160, Total 385 |
| Annual fees (day pupils): | £8,850 - £9,750 |
| Address of school: | 200 Greyhound Road |

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| E-mail address: | London |
| Telephone number: | W14 9RY |
| Fax number: | prepadmin@fulhamprep.co.uk |
| Headteacher: | 020 73862444 |
| Proprietor: | 020 73862449 |
| Lead Inspector: | Mrs J Emmett |
| Dates of inspection: | Fulham Prep School Limited |
| | Mr Peter Way HMI |
| | 16 - 19 May 2005 |

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