

Eastcourt Independent School

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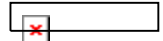
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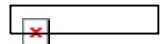
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Introduction and summary

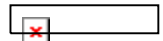


Purpose and scope of the inspection



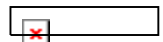
This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school



Eastcourt Independent School is a non-denominational day school for boys and girls aged 3 to 11 in the Goodmayes area of the London Borough of Redbridge. It was originally established as a private enterprise in 1896 and is now owned by the present head teacher and her father. There are 317 full-time pupils on roll. There are also 18 part-time pupils, all of whom are in an early years department known as 'Stepping Stones', which is registered as part of the school. Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds.

Summary of main findings

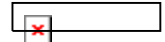


Eastcourt Independent School is a successful school which provides pupils with a good education. It is particularly successful at developing pupils' skills in English and mathematics and providing

for entrance examinations for a wide range of secondary schools. Teaching is predominantly good, although there is some inconsistency within specific year groups.

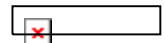
The school provides a safe and well-ordered environment in which pupils are happy and flourish. The provision for social and moral development is very good, and pupils are friendly, well mannered, courteous, and self disciplined.

What the school does well



- it creates a well-disciplined atmosphere in which effective teaching and learning takes place;
- it gives pupils a good grounding in English and mathematics;
- it prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education;
- it provides pupils with very good opportunities for social and moral development; and
- it places a positive and effective emphasis on pupils' safety and welfare.

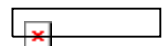
What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations



In order to comply with the regulations, the school should:

- attend to the issues listed in section 6 of this report.

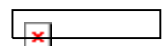
What the school must do to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002



In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA, the school should:

- devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.

Next steps



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

- develop the evaluation of teaching and learning;
- devise a whole school approach to the promotion of pupils' spiritual and cultural development; and
- consider ways of making the playground more attractive.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The school is successful in providing its pupils with a good quality curriculum which meets the requirements for registration.

The prospectus opens with a brief history of the school from Victorian times to the present day, and a letter from the head teacher to prospective parents. The juxtaposition of these two things reinforces the feeling of continuity and tradition which is a strong feature of the school. The head teacher's letter provides three simple aims for the children of the school, namely, that they should be well-educated, caring, and well-mannered. By the time they reach the age of 11, a good foundation has been laid for the pupils' education, they demonstrate care and concern for each other, and are notably well-mannered. However, the prospectus also makes it clear that the school's emphasis is on preparing pupils for entrance examinations for secondary schools. The school is successful in preparing them thoroughly for these examinations.

The school has a policy which describes the whole school curriculum. This indicates that all the areas of learning required by the regulations are covered, albeit with a strong emphasis on the core subjects of English and mathematics, and, from Year 3 onwards, on reasoning. Individual subjects are supported by schemes of work, and teachers of classes in specific year groups are thorough in using these to prepare medium- and short-term plans.

The school has a two-form entry and a mixed ability intake. It has no children with statements of special educational need, but it is the practice to put children who are likely to need more individual help together into one of the two classes. There is no difference in the curriculum and extra support is made available as it is required. At the end of each academic year it is possible for pupils to move from one class to another, although this does not often happen.

The school provides for personal, social and health education (PSHE), for citizenship, and for religious education (RE). These are linked together, but they are given insufficient time during the week and individual teachers do not necessarily give equal time to the three components.

The quality of the teaching and assessment

Teaching was good or very good in well over half the lessons seen and none was unsatisfactory. The teachers plan methodically at all levels and ensure that the parallel classes cover the same

inconsistencies in practice.

In the best lessons, work is carefully planned to take account of differing pupils' needs. Varied tasks are devised to stimulate and engage pupils' interest, with activities in groups or pairs encouraging them to work interactively, learning from the teacher and each other. As a result pupils make rapid progress and achieve well. Effective questioning helps pupils to refine their thinking into more mature reasoning. Occasionally, where teaching is less good, pupils spend too long listening or engaged in tasks which demand too little of them.

The teachers' good subject knowledge ensures pupils are effectively introduced to the knowledge, skills and vocabulary of different subjects. The teaching of literacy and numeracy has a high priority. Consequently, pupils achieve very well in these areas and use their skills effectively in other subjects. Specialist teaching in a range of subjects including French, music, drama and physical education (PE) from Year 3, contributes strongly to pupils' learning. For older pupils, this helps to ease their transfer to secondary school. Classroom assistants are well briefed and contribute positively to pupils' learning.

The school building has some limitations but teachers succeed in creating an interesting learning environment. Resources are effectively used to support learning.

Teachers expect pupils to behave very well and their positive strategies to encourage effort and commitment are highly effective. Relationships between staff and pupils are generally very good and relationships between pupils themselves are relaxed, co-operative and friendly, enabling them to work well together. However, this is not always consistent. In a small number of lessons, even though pupils worked well, the teacher's approach was occasionally brusque.

The head teacher has recently introduced an 'evaluation week' during which she observed teaching in classes across the school. This is a constructive development which could be extended to spread best practice and to address inconsistencies in teaching.

Marking of pupils' work is regular and conscientious. The best is diagnostic, explaining to pupils why their work is good and specifying precisely what they need to do to improve. There are some examples of excellent marking which give pupils deserved praise, identify next steps and encourage continuing effort. Very occasionally, marking is cursory, sometimes with inappropriate comments which could discourage pupils.

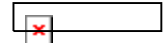
Homework is regularly set to reinforce new learning or practise particular skills. Some parents who responded in writing to the parents' questionnaire, believe that pupils have too much work to do at home and that excessive support is consequently expected from parents too. Inspectors were not able to form a view on this matter but consider that the school would benefit from dialogue with parents to discuss the issue.

The very good assessment procedures include the half-termly tests in English and maths. This information is shared with parents who are asked to note areas of relative weakness and practise remediation with their child. Annual examinations in academic subjects are set for all year groups and these form the basis for the good quality annual reports to parents. The marks from these tests are also recorded and effectively used to monitor pupils' progress over time and to identify any areas of individual attainment which might need further investigation. The evidence from these records shows that pupils achieve well, with almost all leavers gaining admission to the schools of their choice.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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



Provision for the moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good overall and clearly reflected in the pupils' exemplary behaviour and very good working and social relationships. Pupils are well-mannered, polite, friendly and helpful. However, provision for pupils' spiritual development is inconsistent across the school. Owing to the absence of a whole school approach, spiritual development is promoted in varying degrees by different teachers.

Various areas of the curriculum provide opportunities for moral development. This is reinforced daily by the staff in their interaction with pupils. The younger pupils start by formulating class rules and appreciating their use. Visitors, such as the police, invite pupils to think of how laws are rules extended to society and discuss notions of right and wrong. By the time they reach Year 5, pupils follow a full citizenship programme, reflect on how rules and laws affect them and are encouraged to make suitable moral choices. In a Year 6 PSHE lesson, pupils explored peer pressure through role play. In science, Year 6 pupils receive drug awareness education. The good behaviour policy encourages pupils to have respect for the learning environment, school and others' property. Pupils feel safe and feel their property is secure in the school. The reward system encourages them to work hard and behave well.

Pupils' social and personal development is very well promoted right from the reception class. For instance, pupils in Reception were seen helping each other change and get ready for their PE lesson. In some lessons, the teaching strategies fostered various social skills, for instance when pupils worked in pairs or small groups, and had to feedback to the class. Pupils demonstrated very good listening skills and managed their time wisely. Drama and dramatic techniques such as role play and hot-seating develop confidence and self-esteem. Assemblies provide regular opportunities for listening, speaking and singing. Pupils gain self-knowledge through PSHE topics such as 'my family', 'friendship' and 'growing up'. In a particularly good assembly for juniors, presented by Year 6 pupils, they put forward well thought-out ideas about what makes people important. They described several people whom they thought were important and paid special tribute to the school caretaker for all the work he does on their behalf to keep the school clean and tidy.

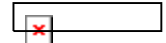
Pupils' opportunities to show initiative are centred mainly on school life. Each class has monitors and helpers. Year 6 pupils are assigned more responsible tasks by their teachers who monitor their performance. Pupils are encouraged to think of others less fortunate than themselves and raise funds for charity. The school provides a few opportunities for active citizenship in the wider community through the Redbridge Junior Citizens' Scheme. In class, younger pupils focus on 'people who help us'. Year 5 pupils look at local and central government and how parliament works. Year 6 survey international organisations and global issues.

RE makes a limited contribution to pupils' understanding of their own and other cultures and faiths in Key Stage 2 because of its reduced curriculum time and because of the absence of a whole school policy. Although pupils have many opportunities to learn about the major world religions as they move through the school, there is not enough time to explore issues related to life in a multicultural society and to deepen their understanding of similarities and differences. They visit the places of worship of the main world religions. They are exposed to various musical traditions and art movements. However, their knowledge and appreciation of a wide range of cultures are not enriched by sufficient educational visits.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



Pupils' safety, health and welfare are systematically considered and secured through a broad range of policies which are effectively implemented. These are regularly revised and updated where necessary. Risk assessments are carried out rigorously for school visits and to assess areas of potential hazard in and around the school building. Supervision of pupils is assiduously undertaken.

The child protection policy covers all essential aspects and staff training is regularly undertaken. The behaviour policy sets out expectations of pupils' conduct and the programmes of study in PSHE successfully reinforce the kind of good behaviour the school encourages.

The school has clear First Aid procedures and sufficient trained First-Aiders on the site at all times. There is a good level of fire safety including regular fire drills.

The admission and attendance registers are kept in good order.

The school has a written plan setting out how it intends to meet its duties in relation to the curriculum under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002, but has not yet planned how it intends to make the premises more accessible.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

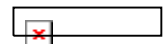
Yes.

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

In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA the school should:

- review its three-year plan to show how it will improve the accessibility of the premises.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

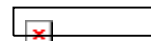


The proprietor is also the head teacher and a full-time teacher. There are effective procedures in place to ensure that all staff are checked for their suitability to work with children. The school has recently reviewed its recruitment procedures and made the appointment of staff more rigorous. Identity and medical fitness are confirmed. Qualifications are checked and references confirming employment history and suitability for the post are obtained in writing. All staff are suitably qualified and experienced for the year group they teach.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



Eastcourt Independent School has suitable premises and accommodation, which provide a good environment for teaching and learning. It occupies a compact site consisting of three former private houses which have been joined together by newer, buildings.

The school has sufficient classrooms to accommodate the present number of pupils on roll. Most of these are suitable in size and furnished in an appropriate way, but one or two of the rooms are rather cramped and movement is more difficult. In addition to the general classrooms, there are specialist rooms for art, French, ICT and music. The ICT room is purpose-built and provides the school with a good resource. There is a large multi-purpose hall, which is used for assemblies, drama productions, and physical education. Although there is a library, it is not an attractive room: it lacks study facilities for the children and is actually an access thoroughfare between the main school and the ICT room.

There are adequate numbers of toilets and washbasins for the number of children in the school, with separate facilities for staff. Some of the toilets are malodorous and this was the subject of a significant number of comments received in completed parent questionnaires returned before the inspection.

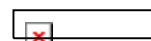
The school lacks a dining room, and pupils eat their packed lunches while sitting at their desks.

The former back gardens of the houses have been converted into an adequately sized hard surface play area, which is divided into two parts. There are markings on the ground for pupils to play, an area for them to sit quietly, and outdoor chess and noughts and crosses facilities. Although the pupils take every advantage of this provision, it is, nevertheless, rather stark.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The school provides a range of information to parents and staff. A prospectus provides the address of the school and name of the head teacher-proprietor and outlines the curriculum for each year group. The aims and ethos of the school are not made explicit. Details about admission arrangements, fees, staff and academic performance are printed on separate sheets inserted at the back of the prospectus. Parents receive three newsletters per year, containing useful information about sports and cultural activities, examination procedures, academic performance, as well as curriculum and staffing. Prospective parents are welcome to view the school by appointment on weekdays while lessons are in progress and to attend two open mornings.

Parents have the opportunity to meet their children's teachers once a year to discuss their progress which is summarised in an informative annual report. They are encouraged to make appointments to meet teachers to discuss any issue that concerns them. The vast majority of parents are highly supportive of the school. However, a few concerns have been expressed by a significant number of them. Not all parents feel well informed of their children's progress, understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints or feel that the school plans enough educational visits. A small minority do not feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or a problem.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

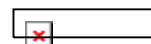
No.

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:

- the full name of the proprietor, her address for correspondence during both term time and holidays and a telephone number or numbers on which she may be contacted at all times (paragraph 6(2)(b));
- a statement of the school's ethos (paragraph 6(2)(d));
- particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for discipline and exclusions (paragraph 6(2)(e));
- particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements and for pupils for whom English is an additional language (paragraph 6(2)(f));
- publish to parents and prospective parents the availability of policies relating to bullying, child protection, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour, and sanctions adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving (paragraph 6(2)(h)); and
- publish to parents and prospective parents the availability of details of the complaints procedure adopted by the school, together with details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j)).

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

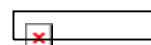


The school has recently updated its complaints procedure and at the time of the inspection was preparing to send this to parents. It meets the requirements of the regulations.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details



Name of school:	Eastcourt Independent School		
DfES ref number:	317/6055		
Type of school:	Primary		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 169,	Girls 148,	Total 317
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys 9,	Girls 9,	Total 18
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 0,	Girls 0,	Total 0
Annual fees (day pupils):	£3,675 (full-time) £1,837 - £2,205 (part-time)		
Address of school:	1 Eastwood Road Goodmayes Ilford		

E-mail address: eastcourtschool@talk21.com
Telephone number: 020 8590 5472
Fax number: 020 8599 8313
Headteacher: Mrs C Redgrave
Proprietor: Eastcourt Independent School Ltd
Lead Inspector: Dr Roy Long
Dates of inspection: 23 - 26 May 2005

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