

Inspection report

Hopelands School

Independent school

DfES ref no: 916/6051

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 27 - 29 September 2005

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 162A 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

Hopelands is a small, independent day school for pupils aged between three and eleven. It was founded in 1954 and is a registered charitable trust. The new headteacher was appointed to the school in April 2004. At the time of the inspection there were 62 pupils on roll. A small number of children in the nursery and reception class attend part-time. The vast majority of pupils are of white heritage with very few from ethnic minority backgrounds. No pupils are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. Around fifteen percent of pupils have special educational needs although none have a statement. The school does not select pupils by ability.

The school aims: *'to inspire children both academically, socially and morally'*.

Summary of main findings

The school has a caring and friendly ethos. Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory and pupils make sound progress in their acquisition of basic skills. There is effective specialist teaching in mathematics, science and music. Extra-curricular activities are good. The provision for pupils' social and moral development is good but more could be done to develop their understanding of other cultures and lifestyles. Some improvements need to be made, particularly to planning and to the assessment of pupils' progress, before the school complies fully with the regulations.

What the school does well:

- the specialist teaching of mathematics, science and music is good;
- the curriculum is broad and enhanced by good quality extra-curricular provision;
- pupils' moral and social development is promoted well;
- relationships between adults and pupils are good;
- it is a well-ordered school where pupils' behaviour is good; and
- it has the confidence and support of parents.

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

- develop comprehensive plans and schemes of work for all subjects;
- establish an effective framework to assess and record pupils' progress and ensure that teachers utilise this information to plan teaching;
- rectify all outstanding health and safety issues identified in section 3;
- ensure that appropriate checks are carried out on all staff before their appointment as indicated in section 4;
- ensure washbasins have an adequate supply of hot and cold water.
- improve the quality and availability of information given to parents and prospective parents as detailed in section 6; and
- ensure the complaints policy complies with regulations as indicated in section 7.

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 written plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is appropriately broad and balanced and covers all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education (RE). It includes personal social and health education (PSHE) and aspects of citizenship. The curriculum provides a suitable programme of activities that enables pupils to make satisfactory progress over time.

The curriculum in the nursery and reception class (the Foundation Stage) is appropriately planned around the six areas of learning for three to five year olds. Learning opportunities are worthwhile and pupils make sound progress in all areas. The specialist teaching enhances the curriculum. The splitting of the Year 5 and 6 class allows focused teaching by specialists, notably in mathematics and science. The teaching seen by inspectors in these subjects was effective and pupils achieved well.

The curriculum is enriched by a programme of interesting and relevant extra-curricular activities. These provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their academic, artistic and sporting skills. For example, there is good quality instrumental tuition and pupils benefit from the football coaching and yoga sessions. Trips and visits provide opportunities to broaden pupils' horizons and further their interests.

The school has suitable policies for all subjects except design and technology. Teachers do plan technological activities despite the lack of guidance. Schemes of work exist for most subjects, but not for French or PSHE. Planning documentation lacks consistency. For example, the science scheme of work provides teachers with thorough and comprehensive guidance about how the subject should be taught. In contrast the English guidance, with the exception of Years 3 and 4, is incomplete. The planning documents do not indicate sufficiently how well differing needs and abilities will be catered for. Not enough is said in many of them about the methods and resources to be used.

Pupils are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise and live healthily. The curriculum and facilities promote this well. The school makes use of the outside community to broaden pupils' understanding of adult life and public institutions. For example, in geography in Year 6, pupils were engaged in a useful project on planning issues in the local high street. This involved statistical surveying; seeking of stakeholders' views and discussion with officers of the district council. The school makes a positive contribution to the community. In the past year money has been donated to a range of charities, in particular to victims of the tsunami, the 'Jeans for Genes' project and 'Red Nose Day'.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. The specialist teaching of mathematics, science and music is good.

The teaching of three-, four- and five-year-olds is sound and pupils' progress in acquiring basic skills is satisfactory. The class teacher has a secure understanding of the curriculum and the teaching of basic skills. Staff plan a broad range of learning experiences and pupils enjoy participating in suitable activities. The level of challenge is generally realistic although on occasions work is not pitched at the right level. As a result, some less able pupils struggle to achieve the lesson objectives and the more able are not stretched enough.

In the most effective lessons, mainly those taught by specialists, teaching is challenging and activities and demands are well matched to pupils' needs. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understand the next steps pupils must take in their learning. Questioning is used well to consolidate and extend pupils' thinking. In the less effective lessons there are some common weaknesses. For example, lessons generally take too little account of pupils' differing learning needs. At times, work is not demanding enough for particular individuals or groups. Lessons and activities are overly directed by the teacher, with too few opportunities for pupils to think and learn for themselves. There are inconsistencies in planning that need putting right.

Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and are happy with school life. They have positive attitudes to learning, even when tasks are sometimes undemanding. Homework is regularly set and is appropriate. It helps reinforce and extend what is learned in class. The parents' survey indicates a significant number of them do not understand how homework is used to build on pupils' previous learning.

Relationships between adults and pupils are good. Pupils say they receive praise but want it to be more frequent. Resources are adequate and effectively used. The book stock in classrooms is satisfactory but of variable quality. Reference books need updating and also to better reflect the multiracial nature of society. The range and quality of fiction and non-fiction books for the oldest pupils requires improvement.

The school uses standardised, national and school-based information to measure pupils' levels of attainment. Procedures are in place to review the progress made by three-, four- and five-year-olds against national expectations. However, results are not analysed or interpreted effectively enough to determine the progress made by pupils across the school. Teachers do not use assessment information effectively to plan lessons to meet the needs and abilities of individual pupils. The marking of pupils' work should be further developed. Teachers regularly comment about what pupils can and cannot do, but not enough is said about what pupils must do to improve. Pupils say that some teachers' marking is more helpful than others, and that they are not always clear about what must be improved.

The school's view about the quality of teaching and learning is more positive than the inspectors' view. This is because the new headteacher has not had sufficient time to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and judge its impact on pupils' learning.

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 the school develops comprehensive plans and schemes of work for all subjects (paragraph 1(2));*
- *ensure that all teachers take pupils' needs, aptitudes and prior attainment into account when planning lessons (paragraph 1(3)(d)); and*
- *implement a coherent framework to measure how well pupils achieve in each stage and ensure the needs of different groups of pupils are reflected in the planning of all teachers (paragraph 1(3)(g)).*

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

Provision for pupils' social and moral education is good. The school's contribution to their spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory.

Pupils' spiritual development is fostered through assemblies which are predominantly Christian in character. RE suitably promotes and develops pupils' understanding about other faiths and values.

Provision for pupils' moral development is good. The curriculum stresses the importance of right and wrong and as a result pupils have a very secure sense of moral and ethical codes. Class rules are clear and require pupils to behave in a moral way and to respect each other. A system of green and red cards provides an effective system for reward and behaviour management. This helps pupils develop good self-control and self-discipline. Pupils are well behaved, respectful to each other and welcoming to visitors.

Provision for pupils' social development is also good. The school's ethos successfully promotes a sense of being a member of a caring, friendly family. The school successfully promotes responsibility among its pupils. There is no school council but each term two pupils in Year 6 take on the role of school captains. They represent the pupils when visitors come to the school and frequently are asked for advice on matters affecting the life of the school. Older pupils willingly take responsibility for aspects of school life; for example, preparing the hall for whole-school assembly. They accomplish these activities with diligence and without fuss.

Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Work in music, RE and history helps pupils become aware of their own culture. On occasions pupils experience teaching about cultural diversity. For example, apartheid was discussed in a poetry lesson, while pupils learn about other faiths in RE. Nevertheless, more could be done to develop pupils' understanding of other cultures and lifestyles.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school has a written health and safety policy including guidance on the supervision of pupils on activities outside school. However, the policy does not take sufficient account of Department for Education and Skills (DfES) guidance. No formal risk assessments are carried out to identify potential sources of danger on the school site. Adequate risk assessments are carried out for educational visits. The school does not keep an up-to-date equipment register. As a result, not all electrical items are subject to inspection.

The school has a written child protection policy. However, it is not effectively implemented because the school does not have a designated member of staff responsible for co-ordinating any necessary action or for liaising with agencies. The headteacher has not received appropriate child protection training. Currently a governor has responsibility for overseeing child protection matters and has received suitable training. The anti-bullying policy is good. It clearly specifies the sanctions to be used in the event of misbehaviour.

A fire risk assessment was undertaken in July 2005. The formal record indicated that the level of fire safety contravened workplace regulations. For example, the school does not carry out fire risk assessments and the fire detection system requires upgrading. Some important recommendations from the fire officer have not yet been acted upon. For instance, escape routes do not have adequate emergency lighting; the fire alarm system has not yet been upgraded although quotations have been sought to do so. Fire drills are held regularly and a record kept in line with regulations.

The school does not have a written First Aid policy. There is therefore a lack of guidance on how to treat injuries and unclear hygiene procedures in the event of a blood spillage. Accidents are properly recorded and a suitably trained First-Aider is on site at all times to deal with accidents and injuries. Pupils are supervised adequately inside and outside the building.

The school maintains an admission register but for new entrants it does not contain the name and address of the previous school attended. Attendance registers are completed at the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions. The entries do not distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absence, and corrections are not always made in such a way that the original entry is clearly distinguishable.

The school has not drawn up a three-year written plan of action to meet the requirements of the DDA.

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 a senior member of staff has designated responsibility for child protection and that they receive appropriate training (paragraph 3(2)(b));*
- ensure thorough health and safety risk assessments are undertaken for the school premises, that action is taken and the outcomes are recorded (paragraph 3(4));*
- ensure the electrical equipment register is up-to-date and all electrical equipment is subject to an annual electrical check by a qualified person (paragraph 3(4));*
- ensure fire risk assessments are undertaken and that the fire officer's recommendations are acted upon (paragraph 3(5));*
- ensure a written First Aid policy is produced and that staff receive appropriate training in its use (paragraph 3(6)); and*
- ensure attendance and admission registers are completed correctly (paragraph 3(9)).*

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:

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

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

Hopelands School is a registered charitable trust that allows parents to become members. There is no proprietor or board of trustees. The school's work is overseen by a governing body. The headteacher is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school and the quality of education provided. With one exception, all staff at the school have been subject to a check with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) before being permanently employed. The school has satisfactory procedures for recruitment but these do not include a sufficiently detailed medical fitness check. Procedures are not consistently applied. As a result, not all staff have been subject to appropriate checks before appointment.

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, prior to their appointment, all staff at the school have been subject to a check with the CRB to confirm their suitability to work with children (paragraph 4(b)); and*
- *ensure that, prior to confirmation of their appointment, appropriate checks are carried out on applicants for posts regarding their medical fitness, previous employment history, character references and, where appropriate, qualifications and professional references (paragraph 4(c)).*

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The school is on one site. There are four classrooms, an outside hall, office and attic space which is used to store resources.

The premises are satisfactory. The school is in good decorative order and is clean and tidy. The classrooms are generally of an appropriate size, while corridors and classroom walls are made attractive by well-presented displays of pupils' work. The Year 3 and 4 classroom is small, with cramped working conditions. This restricts opportunities for group work and limits the accessibility of resources. The hall is small but used well for a range of activities. The flooring, furniture and equipment are suited to the age and needs of the pupils. There are sufficient washrooms for staff and pupils but hot water is unavailable. The playground and grassed area are adequate for the number of pupils. There is plenty of seating and shaded areas to protect pupils from the sun. The narrow staircase to the attic is potentially hazardous.

There are a number of health and safety issues related to the premises, which inspectors drew to the headteacher's attention.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

No.

- *ensure washbasins have an adequate supply of hot and cold water.*

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

A school prospectus is available for parents and prospective parents and this document contains useful information about the school's ethos, routines and general organisation. A 'welcome pack' for new parents provides further useful information including a list of governors with their contact details. However, the information provided does not fully meet the regulations.

Regular and detailed written reports keep parents very well informed about their children's progress. Parents have ready access to teachers on a daily basis. They can, therefore, discuss and resolve any issues that may arise.

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 the school provides present and prospective parents with the following information:*
 - *particulars on the school's policy on and arrangements for, admissions 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));*
- *ensure information is available, and the school makes it clear that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils may request it, about:*
 - *particulars of the curriculum offered by the school (paragraph 6(2)(g));*
 - *particulars 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));*
 - *particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations (paragraph 6(2)(i));*
 - *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)); and*
 - *the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 6(2)(k)).*

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

The school has produced a written procedure for handling complaints but it does not meet all the regulations. The complaints procedure is distributed to all new parents as part of the school's 'welcome pack'. Most parents understand the school's procedures for dealing with complaints.

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 the complaints procedure includes timescales for the management of the complaint (paragraph 7(c)); and*
- ensure that the complaints procedure provides for written records to be kept of all complaints indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage, or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing (paragraph 7(j)).*

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Hopelands School
DfES Number:	916/6051
Type of school:	Nursery and preparatory
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	3 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Boys and girls
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 19 Girls: 39 Total: 58
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys: 1 Girls: 3 Total: 4
Annual fees (day pupils):	£3,960 - £4,704
Address of school:	38 Regent Street Stonehouse Gloucestershire GL10 2AD
Telephone number:	01453 822164
Fax number:	01453 827288
Email address:	enquiries@hopelands.org.uk
Headteacher:	Mrs Sheila Bradburn
Proprietor:	Not Applicable
Reporting Inspector:	Mr David Rzeznik HMI
Date of inspection:	27 - 29 September 2005

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