

Inspection report

Meadowpark Nursery and Pre-Preparatory School

Independent school

DfES ref no: 865/6027

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 5 - 8 December 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

Meadowpark Nursery and Pre-Preparatory School is in Cricklade, in Wiltshire. It has boys and girls from three months to seven years of age. There are 223 pupils on roll, of whom 106 attend part-time and 117 attend full-time. Most pupils go on to attend Prior Park Preparatory School, with which there is close liaison. Pupils attend from a wide area including Swindon and its surrounding villages. The school is open for 47 weeks a year. The school is broadly Christian, but pupils from all faiths are welcome.

Summary of main findings

Meadowpark Nursery and Pre-Preparatory school is a good school in which most pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching. They work hard and are well behaved. Pupils are well cared for overall; they enjoy school and feel safe. The curriculum is broad, balanced and focused on developing pupils' basic skills, especially in English and mathematics. There are very good relationships between adults and pupils. Some aspects of health and safety lack sufficient attention to national guidance. The learning environment is attractive and stimulating. The work of the school is well documented with appropriate and clear policies, although some procedures for staff appointments require improvement. Parents are very supportive of the school. Recent changes in management have given the school a new momentum for improvement.

What the school does well:

- it gives pupils a very good start to their education in the nursery and they continue to make good progress until they leave the school;
- it has a broad curriculum which meets the needs of its pupils;
- it provides good teaching and ensures effective support and guidance for pupils in all classes in the school; and
- it provides a positive, stimulating learning environment both inside and outside.

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

- attend to the health and safety issues identified in section 3 of this report; and
- ensure that efficient checks on staff are completed as indicated in section 4.

Next Steps

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

- improve the analysis of information from the assessment and testing of pupils to help measure their progress more precisely.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to the age of the pupils. The curriculum for the youngest nursery pupils is based on the 'From Birth to Three' programme, while the older nursery pupils' curriculum is planned using the national guidance for the Foundation Stage. The planned activities in the nursery are suitable for the different age groups. There is an appropriate emphasis on play and developing pupils' personal and social skills. Pupils experience a good range of activities, some of which are led by adults and others initiated by the pupils themselves. The timetables are well planned and include appropriate amounts of time for outdoor and creative play.

The pupils in the pre-preparatory department are provided with opportunities to study all subjects of the National Curriculum, as well as religious education (RE). Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught to all classes in the newly developed and well-equipped specialist room. Swimming is included from Year 1 onwards in a local pool. There is a specialist to teach French to pupils from the age of three years.

The curriculum is supported effectively by long-, medium- and short-term plans setting out what the pupils will learn. These help to promote continuity in teaching and progression in learning throughout the school. Teachers plan together and this ensures that pupils of the same age have similar experiences. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is integrated successfully into the curriculum. It is taught as a separate subject and through the regular assemblies. Where pupils need additional support, the curriculum is adapted to meet their needs and pupils make good progress.

The curriculum enhances pupils' experiences effectively through a wide range of educational visits to places of interest such as the Cotswold Wildlife Park, Westonbirt Arboretum and the local Post Office. The school provides after-school care, where a variety of educational activities is available until 6pm.

The quality of teaching and assessment

Teaching is good. This results in pupils making at least satisfactory and often good progress, so that they achieve well by the time they leave the school.

Children make a good start in the nursery where teaching is consistently good and often very good. Routines are clear and teachers and nursery nurses are experienced in supporting the youngest children until they reach reception age in the most effective way. Curriculum planning is very good and activities for children have a clear purpose. Staff make the most of the small classes to provide significant amounts of individual support, to which pupils respond well. There is good interaction between adults and children that is very effective in developing language and social skills. Record keeping and assessment of children's progress in the nursery is very

good appropriately reflecting national guidance. Children are very well prepared for the next stages of their education.

The good support for pupils is continued in the pre-preparatory department. Most pupils enter the reception class above average and make good progress, especially in reading and number work. Pupils are able to talk confidently about how to improve their writing and some higher attaining pupils show high-level skills in mental arithmetic. Pupils' work is regularly marked and usually there are helpful comments either providing encouragement or identifying the next steps for improvement. Some nationally recognised tests are used at the end of each year to measure pupils' annual progress and there is termly assessment of their writing based on levels of attainment from the National Curriculum. Presently, information from assessment and testing lacks coherence in the way it is analysed to inform teachers about pupils' progress. The school recognises this and intends to develop this area of its work. Pupils speak very positively about the help and guidance that teachers provide. Teachers have good subject knowledge and know their pupils very well.

Lessons usually have a good balance of whole class and individual work and there are opportunities for pupils to work together in pairs and larger groups, which they enjoy. Planning is satisfactory and often relates to the appropriate national guidelines or to suitable commercial schemes. Teachers usually ensure that work is matched to pupils' abilities but this is not consistent in all lessons. Sometimes there is not enough challenge for the higher attaining pupils.

Teachers are very consistent in their high expectations of good behaviour. There is much respect between adults and pupils and this leads to a good learning atmosphere in classrooms. Pupils are clear about these expectations and respond by working hard.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

Pupils develop a strong sense of self-worth and grow in confidence, reflecting the good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is a friendly, welcoming atmosphere in the school. In the regular school assemblies the pupils come together to reflect on themes such as Remembrance Day. The school also celebrates pupils' achievements and effort with the giving of Golden Awards during assemblies.

Pupils behave very sensibly in and around the school. They understand and follow the simple school rules. They learn to respect others and to earn trust and loyalty. Relationships are very positive. Pupils in all parts of the school play and work happily together at break and lesson times. The older pupils have lunch in the dining hall of Prior Park Pre-Preparatory School. This provides a pleasant social occasion, where the importance of good manners is emphasised. Staff provide very positive role models.

The school takes an active role in local community events such as the Cricklade Town Festival and the agricultural show. Pupils are aware that there are others less fortunate than they are and raise money for charities, such as Children in Need; they also have an association with a school in Africa. Religious and cultural diversity is respected and assemblies are used as a way to explore and celebrate differences. All pupils of compulsory school age are taught RE and learn, among other subjects, about world religions. There are attractive, informative displays in both the school and nursery, for example relating to Divali and Hanukah, reflecting the many festivals that are celebrated throughout the year. Subjects such as literature, music, art and history add further dimensions to the pupils' cultural understanding.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school has a wide range of clear policies to outline its approaches to ensuring the welfare and health and safety of its pupils. Procedures for child protection meet statutory requirements. Specialist consultants carry out risk assessments for most aspects of the school's work, including fire risk. Although defined in policy, the school is not careful enough in the way it records its risk assessments for off-site visits and not all parts of the national guidance are reflected in the overall health and safety policy. Adequate numbers of staff have suitable certificates for First Aid.

There are suitable policies to promote good behaviour and prevent bullying. Pupils' behaviour is good. They feel safe in school and are happy that staff deal effectively with issues of poor behaviour. Science, physical education and PSHE encourage pupils to lead healthy lives through eating appropriate foods and taking exercise.

Supervision of pupils is good, both in school and while moving between buildings on site. Admission and attendance registers comply with the regulations. The school has a suitable plan for improving the accessibility of the buildings and meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets most but not all the requirements.

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

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

- *ensure that risk assessments for all off-site visits are sufficiently rigorous and are recorded systematically (paragraph 3(2)(c)); and*
- *ensure that the health and safety policy has full regard to Department for Education and Skills guidance: 'Health and Safety: Responsibilities and Powers' (paragraph 3(4)).*

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

Although in practice most aspects of the schools' appointment procedure are satisfactory, there is no clear written policy for the appointment of staff. Criminal Records Bureau checks have been undertaken but there is no check on medical fitness of staff.

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 on the medical fitness of staff have been undertaken prior to their appointment (paragraph 4(c)).*

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The school is housed in two separate premises a short distance apart, with Prior Park Preparatory School between the two buildings. The nursery premises have been cleverly adapted to provide a good learning environment. The accommodation is light, airy and spacious. It is an attractive and welcoming nursery environment decorated with carefully mounted examples of pupils' creative work. The pre-preparatory department is in single-story, purpose-built accommodation, to which a conservatory has been added for whole-school activities such as assembly. Both buildings are well maintained and in good decorative order. Teachers throughout the school ensure that classroom environments are attractive and supportive of pupils' learning. The school is fortunate in being able to use the chapel at Prior Park Preparatory School for celebrations such as harvest and Christmas.

There is a very attractive outdoor adventure playground at the nursery with an appropriate safety surface covering the entire floor area. The pupils make very good use of this and enjoy the play activities on offer, which contribute significantly to their physical development. The pre-preparatory department is built on the site of a walled garden. This is an extensive outside area with grassed and hard surfaces. The apparatus available allows for play that is more adventurous. In addition, the pupils of reception age have their own fenced area that they use as part of their outdoor curriculum.

The classrooms have a good range of resources that are suitable for the age ranges of the pupils. There is a library and a newly refurbished and well-equipped ICT room.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

Parents are provided with a wide range of information in a parents' file and attractive prospectus. Parents have three opportunities each year to visit the school and discuss the progress of their children. These discussions also identify targets for the pupils' next steps in their learning and development. Good quality school reports are sent to parents in the summer term. Parents expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the school in the questionnaire sent out before the inspection.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The school's procedure for handling complaints is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Meadowpark Nursery and Pre-Preparatory School
DfES Number:	865/6027
Type of school:	Nursery and Pre – Preparatory school
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	3 months - 7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 52 Girls: 54 Total: 106
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys: 55 Girls: 62 Total: 117
Annual fees (day pupils):	£720 - £5,205
Address of school:	Calcutt Street Cricklade Wiltshire FN6 6BA
Telephone number:	01793 752600
Fax number:	01793 752600
Email address:	MpSchOffice@aol.com
Headteacher:	Mrs Rajvinder Kular
Proprietor:	Education Plus Ltd
Reporting Inspector:	Mr Daniel Towl HMI
Date of inspection:	5 - 8 December 2005

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