

Inspection report

Windlesham School

Independent school

DfES ref no: 846/6013

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 20 - 23 February 2006

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

Windlesham School, in Brighton, is an independent day school for boys and girls aged from three to eleven years. It was founded in 1948 as a charitable trust with the intention that all children should have access to a private education at an affordable price. It has been on the present site for many years. The original accommodation has undergone extensive development and improvement over the years. Currently there are 209 pupils on roll, of whom 12 attend part-time. Fifty-three pupils receive nursery funding. This provision is registered separately with Ofsted's Early Years Division and was inspected in February 2005. The school is staffed by 31 teachers and 9 teaching assistants. Thirteen teachers teach part-time and offer specialist subject teaching. The school accepts pupils with special educational needs.

The school aims to provide a '*...safe, nurturing and disciplined environment...*' in which to develop '*...pupils' literacy and numeracy skills,...imagination and a joy in learning,...a pride in achievement,...and a sense of responsibility and concern for others*'.

Summary of main findings

Windlesham School is a good school with some significant strengths. It meets its aims successfully. Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education. As a result of good teaching using a well planned curriculum, pupils achieve high standards. Interesting and stimulating activities foster pupils' enjoyment and curiosity. Pupils are well cared for and valued as individuals. Older pupils expressed a desire never to have to leave.

What the school does well:

- its teaching is good with some very good features and pupils make good progress;
- it encourages pupils to behave very well and to develop excellent attitudes to learning;
- its provision for pupils' personal development is outstanding;
- it enables pupils to become articulate and confident;
- it makes effective use of specialist teachers; and

- its support for pupils who need additional help is very good.

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

- update the child protection policy and attend to the training issues in section 3 of this report.

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

- 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:

- extend the systems for tracking pupils' progress to assist target setting;
- ensure that pupils are clear as to what they need to do to improve their work;
and
- make better use of the space in the nursery to ensure that pupils have a wide range of activities available at all times.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The school makes very good curricular provision, which meets the pupils' needs well. It gives them opportunities to extend their knowledge and understanding in all subjects of the National Curriculum. There is an appropriate emphasis on English and mathematics throughout the school but not to the detriment of a broad and varied curriculum. Standards are high and the majority of pupils gain entry to the school of their choice. The school also stresses the importance of personal development through its planned programme. The Foundation Stage curriculum for pupils in nursery and reception is planned effectively using the national guidance. However, due to the constraints of the nursery accommodation it is not always possible for all pupils to have access to a full range of activities at the same time.

From the nursery onwards the school makes effective use of specialist teaching. Music, French, mathematics, art, design and technology (DT), information and communication technology (ICT), physical education (PE), science and religious education (RE) are all introduced at different age levels throughout the school, and taught at some stage by specialists. There are plans to introduce more specialist English teaching in the next academic year and to increase the amount of subject teaching in Years 3 to 6. Pupils are taught in ability sets for mathematics and this enables teachers to match the work very closely to pupils' needs. The school plans to use sets for teaching English. A high proportion of time is spent on PE and sports, including swimming. Specialist coaching helps to develop pupils' physical skills and all pupils have a weekly swimming session in the school's own pool. Computer skills are taught effectively using the well-equipped ICT suite. Music features strongly in the curriculum and pupils benefit from many opportunities to sing, play instruments and perform.

The detailed schemes of work ensure that subject content is well covered. Medium-term plans are used effectively for weekly teaching and daily lessons. The planning focuses on progression in the key skills of literacy, numeracy, speaking and listening and makes good links between subjects. Planning for older pupils provides good opportunities for independent learning although the work planned for younger pupils sometimes relies too heavily on worksheets and books from commercial schemes.

The curricular provision for pupils who need additional help is very good. Pupils are given support both in the classroom and in individual sessions and benefit from the expertise and knowledge of a specialist teacher.

An interesting range of visits further enhances pupils' learning. These have included visits to museums and theatres. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have an annual residential trip to educational activity centres. The pupils benefit from frequent visitors who share their skills and knowledge. After-school and lunchtime clubs this term include sport, ballet, board games and swimming, which further extend the curriculum.

The quality of teaching and assessment

Teaching is good. Classrooms are well organised and teachers foster a positive learning environment. Pupils' excellent attitudes to learning are underpinned by very good relationships and the relaxed, good-humoured atmosphere in classes. Resources are used efficiently and where classrooms have interactive white boards, these are used effectively to explain and demonstrate new ideas. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, of their work rate, and of the quality of their presentation. These expectations are met.

Teachers' planning is good. Weekly plans are drawn from termly outlines and the content builds effectively on previous lessons. Lessons often begin with a useful recall of previous learning that reinforces what pupils know already and enables teachers to check any misconceptions. Teachers are clear about what they expect the pupils to learn and provide interesting tasks to ensure that their intentions are met. At times, teachers' planning is not always clear about how the work will be adapted to meet pupils' differing abilities. In practice, teachers know their pupils' strengths and weaknesses so vary the work as the lesson unfolds and as difficulties arise. The small numbers in each class enable them to respond quickly to individual pupils' needs. Teachers use a wide variety of methods, skilfully combining a mixture of approaches to learning. As a result, direct teaching is balanced well with individual, paired, and group work.

Teachers make effective use of their good subject knowledge to enthuse and engage pupils. Many teachers are skilled at asking questions in a way that develops pupils' curiosity and encourages them to think more deeply about a topic. Many lessons contain a strong emphasis on getting pupils to ask their own questions and to make observations. This contributes much to the development of pupils' very good speaking and listening skills.

Pupils' work is marked regularly and teachers praise pupils' efforts appropriately. However, only rarely do teachers make comments that tell pupils how their work could be improved. Some teachers give their pupils targets for improvement but this is not a consistent practice across the school. Homework builds successfully on lessons, encourages positive work habits and fosters pupils' independence.

There are effective procedures for assessing pupils' attainment. These include annual nationally standardised tests in English and mathematics, end-of-unit tests in mathematics and science, and an end-of-year test in most other subjects. A detailed system for tracking pupils' progress in half-termly mathematics tests has been developed recently. This good system has much potential to be used in setting individual targets for pupils. There is scope to extend the system to English. The school is beginning to make good use of the assessment information to identify pupils who need more help and support, and those that need more challenge.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a significant strength of the school. Each of these aspects has an important impact on pupils' work, attitudes and behaviour. Windlesham School is a Christian foundation and RE is taught throughout the school and through regular assemblies, helping to develop pupils' religious understanding and respect for themselves and others.

Pupils learn to distinguish right from wrong and to take responsibility for their own actions. Staff are very positive role models and encourage very good behaviour and consideration for others. Pupils respond by behaving very well in and around the school. Relationships are very good at all levels, with pupils of all ages getting along well with each other. Play and lunch times are happy, social occasions where pupils can form strong friendship bonds. The older pupils are gaining in maturity and demonstrate that they can resolve issues between themselves, often without the need for teachers to intervene. The positive relationships between staff and pupils demonstrate how the school values and respects individuals. All the pupils are known very well individually by the staff and are encouraged to develop their self-confidence and self-esteem. An older pupil summed it up by saying: *'I feel comfortable here'*. There is a 'family' feel to the school and pupils thrive in the welcoming, nurturing environment.

A strong emphasis is placed on social development, good manners and caring for others. The pupils regularly help to raise funds for those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils greet adults respectfully, yet in a relaxed and friendly manner. There is a strong sense of a shared community with the house merit systems playing an important role. Pupils who are given responsibility as head boy and girl, senior prefects and class prefects take their role very seriously and carry out their duties to the best of their ability. Pupils have helped to devise simple rules for the classrooms and help care for their environment. They are made aware of environmental issues such as recycling, and, as one of the Year 5 pupils said: *'We're big on recycling at this school'*.

A positive attitude to other cultures and religions is fostered with pupils studying different religions such as Hinduism. Younger pupils have had great fun helping to celebrate Chinese New Year very recently and can chant this in Chinese. Art, music, history, drama and geography are also used effectively to help increase pupils' cultural awareness, with many organised trips to both local and national places of interest, theatre and museum visits. Visitors are made very welcome in the school and the local community policeman is a frequent visitor talking to the pupils about road and personal safety.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

There is much good practice in the school to ensure that pupils are well looked after and kept safe. The behaviour policy, applied consistently by staff, emphasises a

positive approach to managing pupils' behaviour. It gives clear guidelines for pupils on acceptable behaviour, rewards good behaviour, and sets out a stepped approach to sanctions, with expulsion as the ultimate step. It is successful in that the very good behaviour of pupils is a strength of the school. The school records carefully any sanctions required for serious offences. A brief anti-bullying policy covers the key areas required. In practice, pupils are convinced that there is no bullying in the school, but that disagreements are sorted out when they are unable to resolve them for themselves. Pupils feel that they are safe.

The child protection policy does not conform to the most recent guidance and needs to be updated. Although it contains a good level of detail for staff on signs of abuse, and guidance on handling a disclosure, it does not identify procedures for dealing with an allegation made against staff. Although all staff have had recent training on child protection, no staff member has had up-to-date training to undertake the role of child protection officer. The school has acted promptly to this situation and a member of staff is due to attend an appropriate course before the end of term.

A comprehensive health and safety policy covers all areas of school life. Risk assessments are made on all parts of the building and on various activities. These include out of school visits, PE, swimming, and subjects such as science and DT. Fire risk assessments are carried out regularly and all fire equipment is tested and checked frequently. The clear First Aid policy gives good guidance to staff on dealing with accidents and on recording them carefully. The school monitors the frequency and location of any accidents and acts upon this information. All staff have received basic First Aid training. The admission register and attendance registers are kept in accordance with requirements.

The school has taken good account of the DDA when planning the new building and also when adapting facilities for current pupils with special educational needs. However, it does not have a written three-year plan showing how the remaining parts of the building can be adapted over time to accommodate such needs.

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

- *update the child protection policy to comply with current DfES guidance and ensure that the designated child protection officer receives appropriate training (paragraph 3(2)(b)).*

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

The school has very thorough and rigorous procedures for recruiting staff and for checking their suitability to work with children. The identity and qualifications of staff are checked and references are taken up from previous employers. A full and comprehensive medical questionnaire is completed by applicants when applying for a post. All staff, including long-serving members of staff, have had an enhanced check with the Criminal Records Bureau.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The school is housed in a suitable range of buildings. Originally there were two detached houses which have extensive single-storey additions. In 2003, an impressive new building was added which considerably enhances the facilities at the school. These now include a 15 metre heated indoor swimming pool and specialist classrooms for ICT, mathematics and science. In addition there are specialist music, French and art rooms, a hall and gymnasium. Some of the classrooms are relatively small and have reached maximum capacity for the number of pupils. Those for the youngest pupils in the nursery are not currently arranged to make best use of the available space. All the rooms are well decorated and are furnished appropriately for the age of the pupils. Attractive displays of pupils' work are found in all areas of the school.

There are two very well-equipped fenced play areas for younger pupils. A large hard surfaced playground at the rear of the premises and a smaller grassed area enable the pupils to have sufficient room to play outside. The school uses an adjacent playing field for sport.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

There is a range of good quality information for all parents and prospective parents. The prospectus contains clear and helpful information about the school's ethos, aims and organisation. The welcome pack for parents gives information about the school policies and procedures. The information that must be available to parents on request, including school policies, is available from the school office.

The school provides parents with helpful curriculum booklets every term. These include details of the work being covered in all subject areas. Regular newsletters also give parents a good flavour of the life of the school. The parents' notice board, placed where they enter each day, is a good means of communicating day-to-day information. An informative school website gives a range of information including forthcoming events. It also provides information on all staff employed by the school.

and their qualifications. Parents indicate they are pleased with the information they receive and feel the school is well run and staff are easy to approach.

Parents have regular opportunities, both formal and informal, to meet with teachers and other staff to discuss their children's progress. Parents receive grade sheets four times a year plus an annual written report. These supplement the two opportunities for direct meetings with teachers and give parents clear and useful information about their children's progress and attainment.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The recently updated complaints policy outlines comprehensive and well-structured procedures for handling complaints. The parents' handbook gives a brief description of the policy and informs them that a copy of the complete policy is available, on request, from the school office. The pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that a small number of parents were not aware of the complaints procedure and so the school has made arrangements to remind them of the policy.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Windlesham School
DfES Number:	846/6013
Type of school:	Nursery and primary
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 98 Girls: 99 Total: 197
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys: 4 Girls: 8 Total: 12
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys: 0 Girls: 1 Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils):	£2,550 - £5,130
Address of school:	190 Dyke Road Brighton BN1 5AA
Telephone number:	01273 553645
Fax number:	01273 558236
Email address:	pa@windleshamschool.co.uk
Headteacher:	Mrs Aoife Bennett-Odlum
Proprietor:	Windlesham School Trust Limited
Reporting Inspector:	Mrs Jane Wotherspoon HMI
Date of inspection:	20 - 23 February 2006

© Crown copyright 2006. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

School inspection reports are available on the Ofsted website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The website lists Ofsted independent school inspection reports, together with information on the work Ofsted does in the independent sector.