

**Inspection report**

**FKS Schools Ltd**

**Independent school**

**DfES ref no: 881/6020**

**Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002**

**Dates of inspection: 13 - 16 March 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**

FKS Schools Ltd has been owned privately by the same family since it was established in 1957 by the current proprietor's mother. The school is co-educational and currently admits pupils from the ages of 4 to 11 years. It is located on two sites situated a short distance from one another in the centre of the rural village of Felsted in Essex. Younger pupils attend Andrews House, which is a listed building, and the older pupils Edwards House, both on the village high street. Pupils are prepared for secondary education with most aiming to proceed to local grammar and independent schools when they leave. Emphasis is placed on providing a *'well-balanced education based on the National Curriculum'*, but with additional preparation of pupils for Common Entrance and 11+ examinations.

The school's aims and mission statement in the brochure emphasise that the school is *'committed to provide the highest quality education for all our pupils in a happy, secure environment which, against a background of community spirit and sensitivity to the needs of others, encourages everyone to achieve their full potential'*. The current headteacher has been in her post for approximately eighteen months.

### **Summary of main findings**

FKS School Ltd is an effective school, which is successful in meeting its aims. Pupils from the reception class to Year 6 say that they are happy to come to school and that they enjoy learning. The school provides a positive learning environment which encourages pupils of all ages and abilities to develop confidence and to have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils' progress is supported by the hard work and commitment of their teachers and the insightful leadership provided by school management in ensuring a good curriculum and good teaching. Plans for development are well founded on clearly identified priorities.

### **What the school does well:**

- the quality of teaching is good and some is outstanding;
- pupils make very good progress throughout the school; the vast majority of pupils in Year 6 achieve places in the schools of their choice;
- its curriculum planning and assessment systems are good;
- it provides very well for the welfare and personal development of pupils; and

- its pupils behave well and develop very positive attitudes to learning.

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

- ensure that pupils' education is not interrupted by other users where facilities are shared with the local community; and
- provide adjustable seating for pupils using computers in the specialist facilities for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in both buildings.

**Next Steps**

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

- continue to develop the use of assessment information and, as planned, to include the use of target setting to support pupils' progress; and
- further improve the quality of lesson planning to ensure that the needs of all pupils are consistently met.

# **COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION**

## **1. The quality of education provided by the school**

### **The quality of the curriculum**

The school provides pupils with a suitably broad and balanced curriculum. Planning is firmly based on the National Curriculum, with the addition of French for pupils from the age of four and verbal reasoning lessons for all pupils from Year 3. Although art and design and technology (DT) are not offered as separate subjects, subject planning reflects individual aspects of both disciplines. The attention given to aspects of DT is reflected in a number of very positive aspects of pupils' work displayed across the school. Planning documentation is of a very high quality and is informed by the school management's clear understanding and knowledge. Teachers have been involved appropriately in planning and developments, supported by an established system of staff meetings and increasing opportunities for professional development.

The curriculum provision is supported by notably effective schemes of work for each subject. Planning for the six areas of learning and links between them is good in the reception classes. School documents provide an effective basis for planning teaching and learning activities. They emphasise the importance placed by management on assuring consistency and continuity in their approach to curriculum provision, teaching and assessment. These strengths mean that the school is well placed for further development.

Overall provision is well matched to the needs of pupils of different ages and abilities. The small classes enable teachers to know their pupils well. Most lesson planning is effective in addressing the needs of pupils with a range of abilities, and is based on clearly defined objectives. Nevertheless, this is an area of ongoing improvement and development. The increasing emphasis on differentiation and target setting further places the school in a position to ensure that the most able, as well as those who experience learning difficulties, always receive well-focused support. Provision for pupils with particular learning needs is good. It is well informed and carefully planned to meet their needs and to support their development.

The curriculum provision supports pupils very effectively in developing speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils from the reception class are guided in developing an understanding of the importance of listening to one another and to their teachers. This good start is built on throughout the school and provides an effective basis for teaching and learning. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is provided for all pupils throughout the school. In Year 6, following examinations, pupils have a 'Life Skills' course designed to support their personal development with an eye to their next stage of education.

The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities appropriate to pupils' stages of development. Inspectors did not agree with the minority of parents whose response in the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that this was an area that needed further improvement. The range of experiences and opportunities available

to pupils is further enhanced by visits undertaken as part of the curriculum and an annual school play. The extra-curricular provision contains an appropriate balance of sporting and cultural activities which pupils say that they enjoy.

### **The quality of teaching and assessment**

The quality of teaching is good and some is outstanding. This enables pupils of all abilities to make good progress. Teaching was outstanding when each pupil was inspired to make new and exciting discoveries, because everyone was challenged equally throughout the lesson. This was exemplified in a mathematics lesson for pupils in Year 2 who began to 'discover' the link between multiplication and addition as they chorused with great excitement: '*I can see a pattern!*' and '*I can see three patterns!*' Teachers expect pupils to work hard; they have good relationships with them; they listen to what pupils say. They manage both behaviour and misunderstanding in learning positively and skilfully, preserving pupils' self-esteem. Consequently, pupils respond very responsibly. They participate in lessons fully, volunteer answers willingly, concentrate seriously and try hard. Importantly, they trust their teachers and are thus prepared to take risks by answering even when not entirely sure that they are correct. This is highly beneficial to their learning.

Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects. They use suitable teaching methods and in the reception class there is a good balance of teaching through adult input and pupils' own discoveries. A key feature of the good teaching seen during the inspection throughout the school was the skilful use of questions to encourage pupils to deduce, analyse and to harness previous learning. This means that pupils achieve an increased depth of understanding as well as extend their breadth of knowledge. Teachers plan lessons carefully and conscientiously. As a result of recent professional development, planned learning objectives are increasingly useful and precise. There is a good emphasis upon planning opportunities for assessing pupils' learning and clear objectives aid this process. In a minority of lessons teaching and learning are satisfactory rather than good or better. When learning objectives are not shared with pupils they are less clear about what is expected of them and consequently the rate of learning is constrained. Similarly, when tasks and activities are not fully adjusted to suit the age or abilities of the pupils, learning is also satisfactory rather than good.

Procedures for assessment are good although the school has identified their use as an area for continued honing and development. All teachers use a system of regular testing to evaluate pupils' progress. Pupils' progress through the school is carefully monitored and recorded. Pupils benefit from consistent systems in each year group that help staff to share information effectively. They know their pupils extremely well and make useful observations of pupils' skills and achievements in addition to formal testing. This academic year there has been a whole-school focus that has successfully improved the usefulness of marking, although this again remains an area for continuing development. Marking now reliably encourages and acknowledges pupils' effort. However, comments that explain what pupils have achieved and that identify next steps for improvement are less consistent and the school recognises that these are not always as helpful as they could be. There have been similar recent improvements in using information to plan to meet more fully the

differing needs of pupils and although not entirely consistent, this is now emerging as a feature of good lessons. Pupils' progress is reported effectively to parents.

A new library at Andrews House provides an attractive resource that is used well to further pupils' research skills and enjoyment of books. In spite of a lack of a designated library at Edwards House pupils have good access to a variety of suitable reading material. The school recognises the need to develop resources to support the teaching of science. Firm plans are established to provide a specialist science teaching room that will increase opportunities for practical, investigative work. Homework is used effectively to enhance learning in lessons. Tasks are frequently well chosen to provide interesting activities that reinforce skills, knowledge and understanding gained in school. The quality of teaching is very successful in contributing to the school meeting its aim to nurture pupils in developing independence and self-confidence.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

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

The school provides very effectively for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' developing self-esteem is well supported through teachers' sensitive questioning and feedback in lessons and their use of praise and positive encouragement. The spiritual dimension of pupils' development is supported by the strong emphasis on valuing individuality. It is further supported through the school's sensitive approach to religion and worship, which includes regular links with the village church, including for special religious and national celebrations. Pupils enjoy school enormously and are frequently seen 'skipping into school'. Pupils' sensitivity to colour, form and texture are supported effectively by their work throughout the school in art and design. Examples occur in Year 1 through a mural based on the work of Van Gogh and in Year 5 through closely observed still-life oil-pastel drawings.

Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong. They are considerate to one another. For example one Year 5 boy was charming in his apology for asking a question at the same time as one of his classmates. Pupils' development in this respect is reinforced through the PSHE programme, which includes visits to the school by the local police. Their cultural development is effectively supported by visits to galleries and places of national importance. They develop good awareness of life in other countries and cultures, for example through their study of French and Muslim mosaic designs in art and design.

Pupils quickly develop good social skills through the support of the school's established conventions and from consistency in teachers' expectations. This begins in the reception class where secure routines are established. Behaviour is very good throughout the school and pupils respond well to their teachers. Response is best when teachers' planning meets the needs of all pupils effectively and they are fully engaged by the demand of the activities provided. Teaching ensures that effective links are made between different aspects of the curriculum.

As a result, it makes a strong contribution to the breadth of pupils' general knowledge and understanding.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

### **3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils**

The school aims include placing great importance on the personal development and welfare of pupils. It is very successful in meeting this aim and provides a very good level of day-to-day care for pupils. The school has a wide range of policies and clearly defined procedures relating to pupils' welfare and safety. As a designated person responsible for child protection matters, the headteacher has undertaken recent training. Clear written policies for promoting good behaviour and preventing bullying help create an environment in which pupils feel safe, confident in approaching adults, and valued as individuals. Parents' responses in the pre-inspection questionnaires acknowledge the school's positive ethos. Pupils understand and appreciate the systems of rewards because they are administered fairly and consistently. The school records concerns about behaviour and the use of sanctions appropriately, although significant misdemeanours are extremely rare.

The relatively recently established health and safety committee has successfully ensured that there are comprehensive policies for health and safety, including detailed risk assessments for educational visits and fire safety. The accident log is completed accurately, and meets the requirement, although some explanations lack detail. This has been the focus of recent staff development, which is an ongoing process. There is a good level of First Aid cover supported by recent training for staff. The policy makes suitable reference to various documents that provide clear guidance for staff. All members of staff are well informed about pupils' medical conditions, including allergies. Regular fire drills and checks of equipment are carried out, evaluated and logged carefully. The admission and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with regulations.

The school has a three-year plan to support its compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 2002. This includes reference to improving access for wheelchair users and the provision of a toilet for the disabled.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

### **4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff**

There are clear procedures established for ensuring that all new teaching and non-teaching staff are checked with the appropriate authority to verify their suitability to work with children prior to them taking up their responsibilities. School administration is thorough in this respect. The school policy is to undertake checks on all staff, although there are several retrospective checks that have been applied for but not yet returned by the Criminal Records Bureau. The school is fully aware of

its responsibilities in this respect and complies with guidance. Other aspects of school checks, such as the procedures for checking the medical fitness of staff to undertake their duties, are carefully considered and effective.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

## **5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation**

The school premises and accommodation are satisfactory and overall fit for purpose. The school's classrooms vary in size. All are adequate for their current use and allow teachers to use a range of teaching and learning strategies. At Andrews House some classrooms are small and are currently at their maximum capacity. Nevertheless, staff organise classrooms very effectively to make best use of the available space by moving desks and chairs as necessary to accommodate different activities. There are firm plans in place for improvements to facilities with the provision of a specialist art room at Andrews House and a specialist science room at Edwards House.

Classrooms are well decorated, clean and tidy. Displays of pupils' work are exceptionally well presented. They celebrate pupils' achievements, enhance their learning and make a positive contribution to the attractiveness of the environment. However, a considerable proportion of pupils' chairs are old and the school needs to plan for a phased refurbishment in this respect as part of its future development. Seating for ICT at Andrews House is not adjustable and needs to be replaced as it does not meet the requirement. There are sufficient washrooms for boys and girls. Arrangements for pupils who are sick are adequate and meet requirements, but the fold out bed currently in use needs to be replaced. At both houses there is sufficient outside space for pupils to play and for physical education lessons. Staff in the reception classes understand the value of learning outside for young pupils and incorporate the use of the outdoor space, as well as the local environment, into their planning.

The neighbouring community facility, the Memorial Hall, provides invaluable classroom accommodation, which is enhanced by the same high quality display as elsewhere in the school. Use of the hall by the local community is rare and the school takes good care to ensure pupils' continuing safety and well being on these occasions. However, the school needs to take immediate steps to ensure that pupils' education is never interrupted by unexpected community events when pupils and teachers are using the building.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

*The school meets most, but not all of the requirements.*

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

*In order to comply in full with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*



- ensure that the hall used by the school is organised in such a way that the health, safety and welfare of pupils is fully safeguarded and their education is not interrupted by other users (paragraph 5(e)); and
- ensure that all furniture and fittings are appropriate for the age and needs (including any special needs) of all pupils registered at the school (paragraph 5(r)).

## **6. The quality of information for parents and other partners**

The quality of information provided by the school is very good. The school recognises the importance of maintaining good links with parents including through the information provided. Parents learn about pupils' progress and activities through academic reports, but also through informative newsletters and the *FKS Termly Times*.

The school's aims and ethos are very clearly expressed in the thoughtfully designed school brochure. The school maintains a detailed and effectively structured range of policies and guidance. They reflect a clear understanding of the need and the vision for the future further development of the school.

All required information is provided in the brochure for parents and prospective parents; it is clearly stated that other policies are available from the school on request. Annual reports to parents are good, because they refer to what pupils have achieved and what they can do.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

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

The school has a clear and carefully prepared policy for handling complaints which fully meets the requirements for registration. It allows for complaints to be initially considered on an informal basis, but provides for more formal procedures and settings should they be required. The policy is helpfully included in the school brochure. According to pre-inspection questionnaires returned, parents say that they feel comfortable about approaching the school with problems and the overwhelming majority that they understand the procedures for handling complaints.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

## SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	FKS Schools Ltd
DfES Number:	881/6020
Type of school:	Primary
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 83   Girls: 104   Total: 187
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys: 0   Girls: 0   Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils):	£4,866 - £5,370
Address of school:	FKS Schools Braintree Road Felsted Essex CM6 3DS
Telephone number:	01371 820638
Fax number:	01371 820638
Email address:	admin@fksschools.co.uk
Headteacher:	Mrs Annette Nightingale
Proprietor:	Miss Valerie Lipman
Reporting Inspector:	Mr Mike Thirkell HMI
Date of inspection:	13 - 16 March 2006

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