

Inspection report

Redehall Preparatory School

Independent school

DfES ref no: 936/6537

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 15 - 18 May 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

Redehall Preparatory School in the village of Smallfield, in Surrey, is an independent day school for boys and girls aged from four to eleven years. The buildings were rented from the local authority in 1980 by staff and parents when the school was set up as a charitable trust with a board of directors. The site was purchased in 1995 and has undergone much change as new buildings have been added. It is part of the school's aims to keep fees low. Currently, the school has 105 pupils organised into 6 classes. Twelve pupils are in receipt of nursery funding and an inspection of this provision took place in November 2004. The school is staffed by six full-time class teachers and four part-time teachers providing specialist subject teaching.

The school aims to *'create a happy environment in which each individual is encouraged to want to learn and to develop his or her own personality'...so that 'children gain confidence in their own ability and achieve their full potential' and 'each child grows to realise the importance of good manners, courtesy and consideration for others, ensuring that they will become responsible members of society'.*

Summary of main findings

Redehall is successful in achieving its aims and has many good features. Pupils make good progress and reach high standards in their work. They love being at school and have a huge sense of pride in both their work and school. The curriculum, supported by good teaching, meets pupils' needs and prepares them effectively for the next stage of their education. Although Redehall is a safe place for pupils to learn, many policies have not been updated and procedures sometimes lack rigour in their application.

What the school does well:

- it values pupils as individuals and fosters very good relationships;
- it encourages pupils to develop good learning habits from an early age;
- it helps pupils to develop into mature and responsible young people;
- it encourages exemplary behaviour by its pupils;
- its teachers have high expectations that pupils will work hard; and

- it ensures that pupils achieve high standards in English, mathematics and science.

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

- have regard to the health, safety and welfare issues raised in sections 3 and 5 of this report; and
- ensure that appropriate checks are carried out on the medical fitness of staff before their appointment.

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 provision and specific teaching of computer skills; and
- sharpen the use of assessment information when planning activities in order to challenge able pupils and to target specific skills.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The school makes good curricular provision, which is appropriate for the pupils' needs and prepares them well for the next stage of their education. It is based on the subjects of the National Curriculum with the addition of French. A strong emphasis on English and mathematics throughout the school, in preparation for the examinations which the older pupils may take for their next school, including the Common Entrance examination, meets with much success. The school makes additional provision in the curriculum by teaching verbal reasoning from Year 3. Information and communication technology is not taught as a separate subject and currently pupils have only informal opportunities to increase their knowledge and skills in using computers. The school plans to rectify this by extending the provision in the autumn term when the new computer suite will be available. There is specialist teaching of French, music and physical education (PE). Pupils can have individual piano lessons taught by specialist staff and all pupils in Years 4 to 6 learn to play the recorder. A satisfactory range of educational visits and visitors, and a small selection of after-school clubs, further enhances pupils' learning.

The curriculum for the younger pupils is based soundly on the 'curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage'. However, there is an over emphasis on a formal teaching approach rather than providing the planned opportunities for play that are expected for pupils of this age.

The school has suitable schemes of work to cover all subjects. Medium-term plans outline what the pupils will be taught and take account of the different ages of pupils within each class. Each teacher then plans their daily timetable for each week to ensure a sufficient balance of subjects. The planning focuses effectively on progression in the key skills of literacy, numeracy, speaking and listening, and, as a result, pupils make good progress in these essential skills. From time to time the school holds specialist activity days in a subject. An example was the science and technology week held in February this year. All year groups took part in valuable investigative and cross-curricular activities.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The teaching at Redehall has many good features which ensure that pupils make good progress. Very positive relationships underpin the well-established learning environment. The atmosphere in classes is disciplined without being oppressive; pupils are not afraid to ask questions and 'have a go'. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and work. As a result, they have high expectations of themselves, and they work hard and achieve well. Good learning habits are established from an early age when the groundwork for reading and writing, and for completing homework, is laid. Standards of presentation of their work are high.

Teachers' planning is satisfactory. It includes examples of good practice where teachers identify clearly what pupils are expected to learn and how tasks may be

varied for pupils who learn at different rates, but this is not consistent. At times, teachers are not sufficiently clear about how they will challenge more able pupils. As experienced staff, they respond intuitively to the different needs of their pupils. They know their strengths and weaknesses and give them very good individual attention and support. The school makes good use of specialist staff who teach music, French and PE.

Teachers' marking is regular and praises pupils for their efforts, but rarely tells them how they could improve their work. This is in contrast to the good verbal feedback that helps pupils to improve their work during lessons. In the best lessons, open-ended tasks offer a good level of challenge for pupils who, for example, are encouraged to persevere in solving problems. At times, however, teachers use a limited range of methods and rely too heavily on commercially printed worksheets. This is especially the case in science where opportunities for investigative work are sometimes limited by available classroom space.

Teachers use homework effectively to reinforce pupils' skills. Some imaginative tasks, such as the posters about Mexico in Form 2, encourage pupils to work independently and to present their work creatively.

Assessment procedures are satisfactory and developing. In Reception and Kindergarten, teachers use the Foundation Stage profiles but these are not completed in the detail required to make them a useful tool for planning the next steps in pupils' learning. Throughout the school, teachers use regular tests in spelling, and reading is tested twice a year. End-of-year tests help to identify where there are gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding and where they may need more support. Termly assessments of pupils' writing and end-of-unit tests in mathematics have been introduced this year. There is scope to make more effective use of the information gained to target the specific skills that pupils need to learn next.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The school makes good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. Redehall is a small, caring community where each individual is valued and respected for their personal qualities. Pupils report that they are happy at the school. Older pupils say they *'don't want to move on, ... everyone knows everyone else here...I love my school'*.

Relationships are very good at all levels, with pupils from the youngest to the oldest playing happily together at break and lunch times. Lunch is a well-mannered, sociable occasion where pupils have the opportunity to sit and chat with their friends and healthy eating is encouraged. Pupils are encouraged to develop their self-knowledge and self-confidence during their time at the school with both older and younger pupils taking on roles of responsibility, such as small tasks in the classroom. Older pupils, especially the head boy and prefects, take their role very seriously.

They are encouraged to take more responsibility in the school and make a contribution to the community life by helping out with tasks such as lining up younger pupils at the end of playtime and setting tables for lunch. The older pupils in particular take a real pride in their school. They have the opportunity to take part in a citizenship programme that teaches them about keeping themselves safe and prepares them for life.

Pupils are made aware of others less fortunate than themselves and raise money for charity projects, including supporting a school girl in Tanzania and sending outgrown uniforms to a school in Nigeria. Pupils behave very well and move very sensibly around the school. Pupils are organised into three houses and eagerly seek to gain house points for effort and good work. They understand the simple school rules and know the difference between right and wrong.

Pupils go on a satisfactory range of visits to places of interest. This enables them to gain a good understanding of public institutions and services. Recently pupils visited a local farm and saw lambs being born. Younger pupils went to the local Waitrose supermarket in connection with topic work. Other recent visits have included Hever Castle and Windsor Castle as part of their work in history. Plans are in hand to visit the Natural History Museum and the theatre this term. Visitors are made welcome at the school with two local vicars regularly coming in to take part in assembly.

Regular assemblies enable the whole school to meet to consider and reflect on different cultural values and practices. Through religious education pupils are studying Christianity as well as a range of different faiths and beliefs. For example, older pupils are studying Hinduism. Opportunities arise in the curriculum through literature, music, art and history to 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 adults in school care for the pupils and look after them well on a daily basis. Although pupils learn in a safe environment, the school's policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils' health, safety and well-being do not conform to requirements and are inadequate. Many policies are not reviewed regularly enough to take account of recent changes in legislation and require urgent updating. Partly, this is due to a lack of clarity between the staff and the directors about lines of responsibility for ensuring that correct procedures are in place and adhered to. The school has responded positively and is already beginning to make good the deficiencies.

The school's policy on child protection contains some helpful guidance to staff but does not identify the signs to look for. It does not meet requirements to have procedures for dealing with allegations against a member of staff. Nor is it reviewed annually by the proprietor. The headteacher is the designated officer for child protection but has not had up-to-date training for this vital role. The school has responded to this need and an appropriate course has been arranged for next term.

The school does not complete regular risk assessments on the building, events, curricular activities or visits to places of interest. Although the school undertakes regular checks on fire equipment and holds regular evacuations of the buildings, the fire risk assessment needs to be reviewed. Two staff with First Aid qualifications ensure that pupils are cared for effectively. Accidents are recorded carefully. However, the policy does not contain the recommended information or guidance to staff. Nor does the school have a policy and guidelines on administering medicines that conforms to current guidelines.

The admission register is satisfactory but attendance registers are not kept in accordance with requirements. Staff blot out entries and do not ensure that registers are taken promptly at the start of sessions and that entries are made in ink.

The anti-bullying policy has a clear definition of bullying and offers staff appropriate guidance. Together with the behaviour policy it establishes a positive approach to discipline within the school. The school expects that a quiet word with pupils will be sufficient to modify any inappropriate behaviour and this is the case. The school has made arrangements to keep records of any incidents of poor behaviour that might incur sanctions of a serious nature but has not needed to invoke these.

The school does not have a plan that shows how it will respond to the requirements of the DDA to cater for the physical and curricular needs of pupils with disabilities who may wish to attend.

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 staff receive up-to-date training in child protection and prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in compliance with Department for Education and Skills (DfES) guidance; 'Safeguarding Children in Education' (paragraph 3(2)(b));*
- *prepare and implement a written policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school which has regard to DfES guidance (reference HSPV2): 'Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits' (paragraph 3(2)(c));*
- *fulfil the requirements of DfES guidance: 'Health and Safety: Responsibilities and Powers' by carrying out appropriate risk assessments on activities in school (paragraph 3(4));*
- *update and implement a policy on First Aid, including a policy and procedures on administering medication (paragraph 3(6)); and*
- *maintain attendance registers in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 (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

The school has satisfactory procedures for recruiting staff and for checking their suitability to work with children. All new staff and volunteers have an enhanced check with the Criminal Records Bureau. Their employment is subject to the receipt of satisfactory references from previous employers and appropriate checks on their identity and qualifications. However, the school does not check the medical fitness of staff prior to confirmation of their 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:

- *check the medical fitness of staff prior to their appointment being confirmed (paragraph 4(c)).*

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The premises are satisfactory. The main building is a former Victorian school premises comprising two classrooms, a hall, kitchen and offices. The two blocks in the grounds each has two classrooms. One block is small for the number of pupils. All the rooms are decorated with examples of pupils' work, celebrating achievement. The classrooms are all furnished and decorated appropriately. A small building in the grounds is used as a 'den' by the pupils for play activities and there is an attractive summerhouse. The school buildings are well maintained. There are sufficient toilet facilities for the number of pupils. The school has ambitious plans to redevelop the main school building during the summer holidays to add two more classrooms and a computer suite. The school does not have appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill.

The school is surrounded by a large, fenced and paved play area, which includes an adventure playground on a bark surface. Several mature trees on the site provide shade in the summer. Each class tends its own raised flower bed containing herbs and flowers, with one class currently having the use of a small greenhouse to grow salad vegetables.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets all but one of 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:

- *provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(l)).*

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

The school gives parents and prospective parents a good amount of written information. The prospectus is informative, well presented, and the photographs give a good flavour of school life. Information about the school's aims, ethos and organisation is presented in a simple straightforward way and is complemented by regular newsletters that update parents on events and activities taking place. Similar information is presented on the school's website. Some essential information to meet the regulations has been included following inspection and a new prospectus is in preparation. This additional information has been sent to parents in a newsletter and posted at various points around the school. Parents are now made aware that they may request copies of policies.

Parents meet teachers formally to discuss their children's progress once a year, but are welcome to meet teachers at other times by arrangement. However, about a fifth of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that they would like more information on their children's progress. Annual written reports on pupils' progress are satisfactory overall but variable in quality. Some comments are bland and give insufficient detail. The better examples are generally informative about what pupils can do, but rarely offer insights into how they could improve.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The school has devised a complaints procedure which meets the regulations. A minority of parents were unaware of this and the school has taken steps to keep parents better informed.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Redehall Preparatory School
DfES Number:	936/6537
Type of school:	Preparatory
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 52 Girls: 53 Total: 105
Annual fees (day pupils):	£2,415 - £2,535
Address of school:	Redehall Road Smallfield Horley Surrey RH6 9QA
Telephone number:	01342 842987
Fax number:	01342 842987
Email address:	enquiries@redehallprep.org.uk
Headteacher:	Mrs E Boak
Proprietor:	Redehall Preparatory School Foundation Ltd
Reporting Inspector:	Mrs Jane Wotherspoon HMI
Date of inspection:	15 - 18 May 2006

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