

Inspection report
Avondale School
Independent school
DfES ref no: 865/6005

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 13 – 14 June 2006

Introduction

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 as part of pilot inspection arrangements 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

Avondale School is a small family-run independent co-educational day school located in Bulford village. At the time of inspection 105 pupils were on roll: 21 were in the Nursery. Pupils who attend the school travel from within about a 10-mile radius, which includes Upavon, Shrewton, Andover and Salisbury. A significant proportion of pupils are from military families based in the area. The school offers an extended day with afternoon childcare for nursery pupils until 15.20 and an after school care club for school pupils through to 17.30 every day.

The school's ethos is based on non-denominational Christian principles, and places an emphasis on consideration for others, good manners and good social relationships. The school aims *'to provide a happy, safe, caring and structured environment where everyone's contribution is valued, and all children develop their full potential in every aspect of school life'*.

Overall evaluation of the school

The school provides a good education for all pupils. The well designed curriculum and good quality of teaching ensure that pupils are engaged and motivated in the classroom and make good progress. The broad range of extra-curricular and sporting activities available enables pupils to develop wider skills and interests. The school's astute attention to the support, care and welfare of pupils ensures all activities are conducted in a safe and secure environment. The school is outstanding at promoting the broad personal and social development of all individuals. The school is well organised and fulfils its stated aims and ethos.

Quality of education

Curriculum

The good quality curriculum enables pupils to make effective progress as they move through the school. The school has a clear and sufficiently detailed curriculum policy which is designed around the National Curriculum. A broad, balanced and relevant curriculum is provided for pupils in the Foundation Stage and for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2. It is enhanced by French which is taught from Reception. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship is taught well through cross curricular links within a range of subjects. The timetable gives appropriate time and

attention to the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The music curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to perform in the school's annual productions and local music festivals. There is good provision for physical education and sport. Each year group has provision for swimming and older pupils enter a local swimming gala.

The school provides a broad range of extra-curricular activities including residential visits and day visits to local places of interest. For example, Key Stage 2 pupils recently visited the Living Rainforest and Old Sarum. These fired pupils' imagination and increased their subject knowledge. There is an interesting range of after-lunch and after-school clubs which include art, music, drama and a range of seasonal sports. The clubs are well attended.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good. For example, a pupil with a statement of SEN is provided with effective individual support from a qualified teacher. The sessions are well planned to meet the pupils' needs.

Teaching and assessment

Teaching across all age ranges is good and helps pupils make good progress. Teachers design topics to motivate and engage pupils. They make good use of a broad variety of learning activities and resources. Teachers use question and answer sessions particularly well to check learning and involve the more passive pupils. This also helps underpin good development of pupils' speaking and listening skills. Teachers of Years 5 and 6 focus on developing a higher level of autonomy amongst pupils in particular by developing their planning, research, study and information communication technology (ICT) skills.

The school has developed a common approach to lesson planning which it continues to refine. Teaching is particularly well structured to cater for the needs of individuals who have been identified as requiring additional learning support. Schemes of work however, seldom indicate clearly how activities will be planned to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities.

Pupils regularly receive homework, however, the school does not have a clear structure or approach to homework across all age groups.

Assessment across the school is satisfactory. The small group sizes allow many teachers to mark work in lessons with the pupils and provide verbal feedback to them. However, pupils receive insufficient written guidance in their exercise books for future reference.

Pupils' progress and achievement

Pupils' progress and achievement are good, including those identified with additional support needs. Teachers place high expectations on pupils, who invariably achieve the challenging targets set for them in lessons. Teachers are able to compare pupils' progress to national norms through assessments in the Foundation Stage and at Key

Stages 1 and 2. Over the past few years a significant proportion of pupils have exceeded the national average in the end of key stage assessments. Some pupils in Year 6 take the 11-Plus examination, and a proportion of those regularly progress on to the local grammar schools. Others successfully gain places at variety of other local and regional schools.

Personal development

Provision for the pupils' personal development is outstanding. In line with the school's ethos, the family atmosphere enables pupils to thrive and grow in self-esteem and self-confidence. There is mutual respect between pupils and staff. Pupils know that what they have to say is valued by their peers and their teacher. They listen intently to everyone's contributions in assemblies and in class discussions. Pupils are keen to answer questions and to display their newfound knowledge. There is a strong emphasis on healthy eating and the need for exercise.

Behaviour from the youngest to the oldest pupil is excellent. The pupils are courteous and well mannered to each other, their teachers and visitors to the school. Attendance and punctuality are good.

The school's House system is popular and pupils are delighted when they achieve a House point. The school actively promotes celebration of success in several ways. Younger pupils receive stickers and stamps for good work, and these are used judiciously. Certificates for effort or achievement are awarded in assemblies. Pupils experience responsibility through positions of House Captain, prefects and class monitors.

The school and class assembly programme and other activities provide good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development for pupils. The school's strong moral code is promoted through assemblies and class discussions on current issues of importance. Most pupils demonstrate a clear sense of moral justice for themselves and for others, as displayed in a religious education (RE) lesson on an escape from slavery.

The school promotes understanding of other cultures and traditions satisfactorily through RE, PSHE and geography. Members of other cultures have visited the school and provided interesting experiences for the pupils, although this is an area that the school could develop further.

The welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school is meticulous in assuring the welfare, health and safety of pupils. The headteacher has had recent training on child protection issues which is due to provide the basis of further staff training. The school has appropriate measures in place to deal with any incidents of bullying.

Staff are deployed appropriately throughout the day to supervise pupils at break and lunch times. Appropriate risk assessments are undertaken before pupils attend

school visits. Three members of staff hold current First Aid qualifications. The school has an appropriate written First Aid policy and procedures. Provision for pupils who are ill is adequate.

The school makes good provision for fire safety, and fire alarm tests and drills are regularly carried out and well documented. Fire fighting equipment is inspected and maintained under external contract. Fire risk assessments have been completed.

Healthy living is promoted actively throughout the school. Healthy and nutritious snacks and lunches are provided each day. The school's kitchen garden also provides lettuces and radishes grown by pupils for lunch. Drinking water is freely available around the school.

Organisation of the school

The school is well led and managed, and is clearly focused on continuing to raise the quality of the learning experience for pupils. Virtually all supporting policies, procedures and documentation are in place. They are clear, concise and help underpin the smooth running of the school.

The school is clean and well maintained. There are sufficient outdoor recreational areas including a playground, playing field and outdoor stage. The school also has a kitchen garden and greenhouse, and makes regular use in lessons of a nearby pond and small brook. The multi-purpose hall is used extensively for assemblies, productions, and indoor play when it is raining. Some classrooms are relatively small, but adequate for the small group sizes. All classrooms are well decorated and conducive to learning, with well-presented, relevant displays. In the classrooms of younger children there are relatively few displays of pupils' work. The school is not fully compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 (DDA) legislation as it has not considered disability issues or developed a disability policy.

The staff team is highly effective. There is a strong team ethos and mutual respect amongst staff. Teachers acknowledge the clear leadership and guidance they receive from the headteachers. The school places a particularly strong emphasis on the continuous professional development of its entire staff. Virtually all staff regularly attend training activities and frequently disseminate information back to other colleagues. The school's appointment process is not fully compliant with regulations as it does not formally check the medical suitability of staff prior to their appointment.

The school maintains strong links with parents, who are full of praise for the quality of provision at the school. In particular parents recognise the homely and highly supportive nature of the school. They praise the school's ability to respond to the particular needs of each individual pupil. The school communicates highly effectively with parents, for example through a regular newsletter. Parents receive regular, detailed reports on their child's progress. The school prospectus is also informative and clearly explains the school's ethos and aims. Parents also receive a comprehensive information pack when pupils enrol. A small proportion of parents

are not fully aware of the school's complaints policy and procedures which, however, fully comply with the legislative requirements.

What the school must do to comply with regulations

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 and the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the school should:

- develop a three year programme to consider and address disability issues, in line with legislation in the Disability Discrimination Act (2002); and
- carry out checks on the medical fitness of staff and maintain a documentary record that the school has checked identity, prior to confirmation of their appointment, (paragraph 4(c));

What the school could do to improve further

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

- provide more written feedback to pupils following assessment of their work;
- consider in more detail how activities will be planned to meet the needs of pupils of different capabilities; and
- develop further pupils' awareness of multicultural communities.

School details

Name of school:	Avondale School
DfES Number:	865/6005
Type of school:	Primary
Status:	Independent
Date school opened:	1923
Age range of pupils:	3 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll :	Boys: 61 Girls: 44 Total: 105
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys: 1 Girls: 0 Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils):	£2,790 - £4,710
Address of school:	High Street Bulford Salisbury Wiltshire SP4 9DR
Telephone number:	01980 632387
Fax number:	01980 632387
Email address:	avondale.school@tiscali.co.uk
Headteacher:	Mr R P McNeall and Mrs S E McNeall
Proprietor:	Mr R P McNeall and Mrs S E McNeall
Reporting Inspector:	Peter Nelson (HMI)
Dates of inspection:	13 – 14 June 2006

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