

**Inspection report**  
**Annemount School**  
**Independent school**  
**DfES ref no: 302/6051**

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

**Dates of inspection: 8 – 11 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**

Annemount is a small independent co-educational pre-preparatory school in the Hampstead area of north London, for children from two years nine months to seven years old. The nursery class takes children from two years nine months old and all children attend full-time from the term after their fourth birthday, or before, if parents so choose. There are currently 64 full-time and 36 part-time places, and the school endeavours to balance the number of boys and girls in each year group. Pupils come from a range of backgrounds and cultural heritages. At the age of seven, the majority move on to a range of prestigious independent schools in the north London area. As well as providing a broad curriculum, the school employs a number of specialist teachers to offer activities including French, violin, drama and chess.

### **Summary of main findings**

Annemount is a successful school, which enjoys a high level of parental confidence. Its supportive family environment encourages pupils to have a curiosity for, and love of, learning. The school gives children an exciting, happy start to their education and prepares them very well for the next school. The dynamic and caring leadership of the headteacher is pivotal to the school's success. The rich, varied curriculum is effectively taught by the skilled and enthusiastic staff team. Staff know individual pupils' capabilities very well, and plan effectively to ensure that all make good progress. The attractive and well-maintained school environment provides a setting very conducive to learning. The school complies with all the regulations.

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

- it values each child as an individual;
- it ensures that pupils reach high standards, firmly based on learning through play in the early years;
- it successfully encourages pupils to behave very well, and to become articulate and self-confident;
- it establishes very close rapport with parents, which supports pupil's learning; and
- it encourages pupils' creativity through a wide range of activities including music, dance, drama and performances.

**Next Steps**

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

- extend the good practice in which teachers make clear to pupils what they need to do to produce good work, and encourage pupils to evaluate their own and others' efforts.

# **COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION**

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

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

The curriculum is rich and varied, and prepares pupils very well for the next stage of their education. Staff plan the curriculum thoroughly, ensuring that what is taught is appropriate for the age group by basing their planning on the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum, adapted for the specific needs of the school. There is an appropriately strong focus on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, alongside which staff place great emphasis on speaking and listening skills, producing articulate, confident learners. The school has very good provision for personal, social and health education, which underpins the work of the school. Pupils with additional learning needs or those learning English are very well supported.

The school ensures that pupils' creativity is nurtured through a range of exciting and interesting activities and through opportunities to take part in performances, whether singing, playing the piano or reciting poetry in assemblies or on more formal occasions. Staff make effective use of the local area, for example nature walks on Hampstead Heath or visiting the local garden centre to buy plants for their topic on growth. In addition to the class teachers, the school benefits from high quality specialist teachers to enhance the curriculum, adding expertise in information and communication technology (ICT), drama, French and physical education. There is a well-attended range of extra-curricular activities, with before and after school clubs which currently offer chess, Suzuki violin, ballet and cookery.

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

Teaching is good throughout the school, and there are some very good features. Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and of the stages of development of those they teach. In the nursery, kindergarten and reception classes, there is an appropriate balance between activities led by adults and opportunities for children to make choices and explore and experiment with a range of materials and equipment. Time is used well, and activities are varied so that lessons hold the interest of the learners. Group and paired work effectively promotes speaking and listening skills. Resources are well chosen, of good quality, and used effectively to enhance learning. Staff work together as an effective team, forming very good relationships with pupils. They set high expectations and manage behaviour effectively; pupils behave very well in response.

In the best lessons, teachers discuss with pupils what they need to do to produce good work, so that they are clear about how to succeed. They encourage them to become independent by using this information to evaluate their own and others' efforts in a supportive way. However, this practice is not consistent across the school.

The good teaching throughout the school allows pupils to make very good progress, increasing their knowledge and understanding and improving their skills to a high

standard. Pupils enjoy their learning, concentrate well, listen carefully and participate fully in lessons.

The assessment of learning is thorough and staff know pupils' strengths and areas for development very well. The school has a good range of strategies for assessing progress, from the focused observations in the early years to continuous checking and recording of older pupils' achievements as they teach. This information is very well used to ensure that the needs of all learners are addressed, so that progress is good. It is also well used for reporting to parents, both informally in discussions and in the written end of term reports.

***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. Annemount School is a small, caring, family-style community where each individual is valued and respected for their personal qualities. Pupils report that they are happy at the school and one noted that they are able to '*do things that we really like.*' Children thrive in the welcoming, nurturing environment.

Pupils are encouraged to develop their self-knowledge and self-confidence during their time at the school. Older pupils take on roles of responsibility, with the head boy and girl taking their roles seriously. Pupils have the opportunity from an early age to learn to play a musical instrument such as the violin, using the Suzuki method, and take part enthusiastically in school assemblies and productions. Older pupils are encouraged to take responsibility in the school and make a contribution to the community life, helping out with various tasks. Pupils are made aware of others less fortunate than themselves and regularly help to raise money for charity projects.

A strong emphasis is placed on social development, good manners and caring for others. The school is a well-ordered yet unpressured community where pupils understand the simple school rules. These are positive rules which emphasise the 'Do' and not the 'Do not'. Children know the difference between right and wrong. They are encouraged to act responsibly even at a young age and they behave very well both in class and around the school. Relationships are very good at all levels, with pupils of all ages getting along well with each other. Staff are very positive role models and pupils and staff respect each other and treat one another kindly.

Pupils go on many visits to places of interest. This enables them to gain a good understanding of public institutions and local services. Visitors are encouraged, such as the farm owners, who during the inspection brought a very wide range of animals ranging from new born mice to fallow deer to the school, enabling the pupils to stroke, hold and feed them. This was an invaluable experience, and the pupils were captivated by the animals.

Regular assemblies enable the pupils to consider and reflect on different spiritual and cultural values and practices. The school celebrates the different backgrounds of the pupils and they are encouraged to share their own cultures. Festivals are celebrated throughout the year, with pupils enjoying dressing up, for example as Japanese ladies, to celebrate a particular festival. Pupils' cultural development is further enhanced through music, a particular strength of the school, and through drama, art and topic work. The school participates actively in initiatives such as the National Gallery 'Take One Picture' project, with one class making bird cages and another musical instruments, to reflect what they saw in the painting.

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

Yes.

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

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils is good. Annemount School is a safe place in which to work and learn. The well-thought-out policies including behaviour management, anti-bullying and child protection, are implemented effectively. The behaviour policy, applied consistently by staff, emphasises a positive approach to managing behaviour. It is successful in that very good behaviour is strength of the school.

A comprehensive health and safety policy covers all areas of school life, including visits outside the school, with detailed risk assessments carried out for all visits. The school has a high level of fire safety awareness with the fire officer visiting recently to confirm that the school has made appropriate fire arrangements. A detailed fire risk assessment has been carried out; fire drills are held regularly and documented and all fire appliances are subject to an annual maintenance contract. There is a detailed First Aid policy in use, trained First Aiders on site at all times and well-stocked First Aid boxes are located where needed. Pupils are very well supervised at all times when they are in the school with a high ratio of staff to pupils. There are very good procedures to help new children to settle in, and for preparing them for admission to their next schools. The admission and attendance registers are kept according to requirements. The school fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

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

Yes.

### **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. All staff, including long-serving members, 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**

Annemount School is set in a purpose-built detached house, which was built by grateful parents for the previous owner of the school in the 1930s. It is surrounded by a large, attractive garden, which has been carefully adapted for the pupils' use with grassed sections and play areas with a soft surface including a small adventure playground. All parts of the school are very well maintained and decorated. The classrooms are all suitable for the number of children and provide an interesting, stimulating learning environment decorated with well-mounted displays of pupils' work.

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

Yes.

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

There is a very effective partnership between the school and the parents. The active parent-teacher association supports the school well, and provides additional funds for outings and visits. The information the school provides for parents and other interested parties is detailed, informative and meets all the regulations. This begins with clear information for potential parents, setting out the ethos of the school and providing helpful guidance about the curriculum. The parents' handbook, regularly revised, contains much valuable information about the school's policies and procedures. Regular newsletters and the parents' notice board are well used to keep parents up to date with current events and to provide reminders about excursions and about visitors to the school.

There are two formal opportunities each school year for parents to meet with their children's teachers, and all staff are available by appointment to discuss progress or any parental concerns. 'Back to School Night', held near the start of the school year, enables parents to learn about the curriculum for the coming year and the opportunities that the school provides. A system of 'care and concern' meetings provides for the discussion of any additional learning needs. Parents are given helpful guidance on the most appropriate choices of the next school for their child. Detailed end-of-year reports provide a good level of information about pupils' achievements, extended by short reports from specialist teachers.

A high proportion of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and expressed great satisfaction with the school.

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

Yes.

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

There is a comprehensive procedure for dealing with complaints which meets the regulations; all parents have been given a copy in the handbook. It sets out both the formal and informal procedures to be followed should a parent wish to make a complaint.

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

Yes.



## SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Annemount School
DfES Number:	302/6051
Type of school:	Nursery and pre-preparatory
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	2 years 9 months – 7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 46    Girls: 18    Total: 64
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys: 20    Girls: 16    Total: 36
Annual fees (day pupils):	£4,710 - £7,875
Address of school:	18 Holne Chase London N2 0QN
Telephone number:	020 8455 2132
Fax number:	020 8381 4010
Email address:	headteacher@annemount.co.uk
Headteacher:	Mrs Geraldine Maidment
Proprietor:	Mrs Geraldine Maidment
Reporting Inspector:	Ms Linda Murgatroyd
Date of inspection:	8 – 11 May 2006

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