

Inspection report
Ashbridge Independent School and Nursery
Independent school
DfES ref no: 888/6027

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 25 – 27 September 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

Ashbridge Independent School is a co-educational school for boys and girls from four to eleven years. The school has a large nursery for babies aged 3 months to 3 years which was inspected by the Early Years' Inspectorate in September 2005. The school and nursery moved in 2001 to its current premises in Hutton, a rural area near to Preston, Lancashire. At the time of the school inspection there were 42 boys and 30 girls on roll. None have a statement of special educational need or require support for English as an additional language. Admission is non-selective. The school enjoys an attractive setting in 11 acres of meadows and woodland. It places emphasis on using the outdoor environment to widen the pupils' learning experiences. The school's key principles are: *'breadth and balance, depth and challenge, enjoyment and enthusiasm and flexibility to enable rapid response to a changing environment.'*

Overall evaluation of the school

Ashbridge Independent School is a good school with some outstanding features. It meets all of the regulatory requirements. The school has exemplary procedures for the pupils' welfare, health and safety. Its strengths lie further in its broad and balanced curriculum which is well-matched to the needs of its pupils. Teaching is good and enables pupils to make good progress. The curriculum is promoted effectively through the use of the excellent indoor and outdoor environment.

Curriculum provision is good. It provides all subjects of the National Curriculum and is extended by French, drama and environmental science. Personal, health, and social education together with citizenship (PSHCE), is taught throughout the school. Planning for subjects is very good with thorough long-term planning. Published schemes of work effectively supplement planning in mathematics, French and information and communication technology (ICT). Planning for the pupils in the Reception class is based appropriately on national guidelines for this age group. In Year 1, planning is based on the early stages of the National Curriculum through themes which incorporate subject areas. Although both Reception and Year 1 pupils are grouped as one unit, their work is planned conscientiously to meet the needs of their ages and abilities. The work planned for other joined year groups is also carefully planned to meet the pupils' needs and National Curriculum requirements. Exemplary use is made of the excellent outdoor facilities which promote the pupils' progress in a range of subjects including science and art. Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs and those identified as gifted and talented.

Individual education plans have specific, measurable targets and are reviewed half-termly. The curriculum is supported by high quality resources.

Teaching is good overall with some outstanding features which ensure that the pupils make at least good progress. Pupils say that they learn a lot in school and this is reflected by the great majority of parents' views expressed in the inspection questionnaire. Lesson planning is very good and lessons are well prepared. In the best lessons, such as a science lesson on classification in Junior 2, sharply focussed questioning and participation of pupils lend pace and challenge to the lessons. Clear aims and objectives are set at the start of the lessons and pupils' understanding of them is checked. Teachers have good command of their subject and use their skills and experiences to take pupils' knowledge and understanding to a deeper level, as in a history lesson on Ancient Egypt in Junior 1. Good use is made of time and pupils are made aware of the time they have to complete a task. Tasks are well-matched to the range of ability in each year group. A good example of this was seen in Infant 1, when specific work was set for the Reception pupils and group work was closely matched to the range of ability in Year 1. Effective use of interactive white boards (ICT) to promote learning was seen in all classes. A good example was seen in a numeracy lesson in Infant 2. The lessons judged to be satisfactory contain some of the good elements above, but sometimes pupils are allowed to drift off task or time limits are not clearly defined. Occasionally, pupils' understanding is not checked fully or insufficient resources are available. However, in one lesson, the lack of resources was due mainly to pupils leaving their reading books at home. When teaching is satisfactory, learning is satisfactory. Monitoring of teaching by the headteacher and assistant headteacher is very good. Detailed records are kept for each class teacher.

Assessment of pupils' progress is very good. Detailed analysis is made to ascertain the standards achieved by pupils in relation to national averages. Pupils in Reception continue with the assessments set out in the Foundation Stage Profile. Throughout the school, formal assessment of mathematics and reading by published standardised tests take place twice a year as well as national statutory and optional assessments. Targets are set for individual pupils and discussed with parents and pupils each term. The school has an efficient tracking system in place to monitor pupils' progress over time.

The school makes good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. Pupils' good spiritual development is promoted through assemblies, and uplifting lessons and activities that give pupils the opportunity to "think, and act beyond self." Outdoor education and experiences of growing vegetables and flowers allow pupils to become familiar with the changing seasons. The proximity of donkeys, goats and sheep together with rabbits and guinea pigs provide opportunities for pupils to develop respect for animals. The school encourages learning and caring as a paramount aspect of school life, and a strong emphasis is thereby placed on pupils' social development. The school has a clear moral code, which is upheld and applied consistently and universally by staff. This enables pupils to learn to distinguish right from wrong, and most accept responsibility for their own behaviour. However, there is a small, but not insignificant minority of pupils, who, at the beginning of the new school year, have not yet

internalised this responsible attitude, and as a result, they sometimes fail to respond quickly to their teachers' instructions. Pupils learn about major world religions in religious education classes. They are encouraged to appreciate and enjoy the rich diversity of cultural differences through practical experiences, including French, which they enjoy. They also learn about the "World family" and their own place in it.

The school makes outstanding provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils, and some elements of the provision are excellent exemplars of care. A well thought out range of policies and procedures addresses all aspects of pupils' welfare. All incidents involving pupils' welfare are logged and recorded in detail, and the school is quick to respond with appropriate action. Detailed positive behaviour and anti-bullying policies outline the school's caring ethos and approach to sanctions and rewards. The importance of pupils' welfare, health and safety, both within and outside school, is given highest priority. Pupils are closely supervised, in a supportive rather than restrictive role, and this safeguards their safety and well-being at all times. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and know to who to turn to if necessary. All members of staff are qualified in first-aid. All the different areas of the school are safe places to work and learn. In PSHCE lessons, pupils learn about the importance of safety in school and at home. When visits are undertaken, detailed risk assessments are implemented most effectively. The policies and practices, suitably augmented by health and safety professionals, such as the local fire officer, include those which relate to fire safety. Staff, who are well deployed to ensure the pupils' safety, have a clear understanding of school policies, particularly those policies which relate to child protection. An admission register and attendance registers for each class are kept and administered to comply with the regulations. The school's detailed three year accessibility plan is predicated on a substantial audit of premises and therefore fulfils its duties under the Disabilities Discrimination Act.

A major strength of the school is the outstanding quality of the premises and accommodation. The classrooms and internal areas of the school are spacious, bright and airy. All classroom furniture and fittings are of high quality and suitable for each age group. Play areas are creatively designed and each class has a designated area for gardening. A potato patch has provided many learning opportunities.

The school's range of information for parents is excellent. The school provides a number of ways for two-way communication with parents who cannot come into school on a regular basis. There are two well-attended meetings for parents, in October and February, in which pupils' progress is discussed and targets are set. Parents receive copies of the targets. A four page annual report for each pupil indicating academic and personal progress is provided in the summer term. The vast majority of parents feel they are kept well-informed about their child's progress. The vast majority of parents are very positive and praise the work of the school. However, a small number of parents expressed concern in the inspection questionnaire about the recent reorganisation of the school. A very detailed annual report of the school including academic performance is provided at the start of the autumn term which fully covers the preceding school year.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

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:

- continue to raise standards of teaching further by sharing the excellent practice which is found in the best lessons
- encourage all pupils to quickly adopt the high standards of behaviour seen across the school

School details

Name of school:	Ashbridge Independent School
DfES Number:	888/6027
Type of school:	Independent day school
Status:	Primary
Date school opened:	1995
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll :	Boys: 42 Girls: 30 Total: 72
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys: 0 Girls: 0 Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils):	£ 5382 school only
Address of school:	Lindle lane Hutton Preston PR4 4AQ
Telephone number:	01772 619900
Fax number:	01772 610894
Email address:	info@ashbridgeschool.co.uk
Headteacher:	Mrs Hilary Sharples
Proprietor:	Ashbridge School and Nursery Ltd
Reporting Inspector:	Mrs Cecile Corfield
Dates of inspection:	25 – 27 September 2006

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