



Athelstan House School

Independent School

Inspection report

**Better
education
and care**

DfES Registration Number 3186060
Unique Reference Number 102941
Inspection number 296772
Inspection dates 30-31 January 2007
Reporting inspector Ms Pauline Hoey AI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

Age group 2-7	Published 23 February 2007	Reference no. 296772
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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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

Athelstan House School is an independent, non-selective day school for boys and girls. The pupils are admitted to the school at the age of two and a half years and leave at the age of seven. At the time of the inspection 59 pupils were on roll including 22 who attend part time. 19 are funded under the Nursery Scheme. These pupils attend a number of morning and afternoon sessions each week. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs and none at the early stages of learning English as an additional language.

The school was established on its present site in Hampton, in south-west London, in 1985. The school *'considers every child to be special and it aims to create a happy, caring and stimulating learning environment where each child feels valued and can develop to his or her full potential.'*

Evaluation of the school

Athelstan House School is a happy school with a strong family ethos. It provides good quality education, meets its aims successfully and meets all but two of the regulations in full. Strong emphasis is placed on good pastoral care, and the school helps pupils to develop into confident, articulate young people. Parents strongly support the view that pupils enjoy coming to school and that teachers expect them to work hard. Pupils attain high standards in reading, spelling and mathematics. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of education

The school makes good provision for pupils' academic, physical and personal development. The curriculum in Key Stage 1 is appropriately broad and balanced and covers all subjects of the National Curriculum and citizenship. Aspects of personal, social and health education are taught during circle time. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' skills in phonics, literacy and numeracy, resulting in pupils making good progress in these subjects. Reading skills are promoted effectively across the curriculum. From an early age pupils develop a love of stories and books.

The school receives funding for some of its nursery-age children and accordingly they are taught the national Foundation Stage curriculum. Pupils learn from a wide range of activities and their natural curiosity is fostered appropriately. Pupils develop into independent learners from an early age.

The programme of learning for pupils under the age of three years provides appropriate stimulation and experiences to enable them to make increasing sense of their widening world. Learning opportunities are worthwhile and pupils make good progress as they explore, investigate and experiment.

Dance, physical education (PE) and swimming are included in the learning programme for pupils in the Reception class and Key Stage 1. Although swimming provides pupils with good exercise and an awareness of water safety issues, the current transport arrangements result in the pupils being away from school for two hours. The benefits of providing swimming are diminished by the impact it has on the afternoon provision, especially for Reception class pupils.

The school places appropriate emphasis on the early identification of pupils who require additional support. It organises small group work so that pupils benefit from sharply focused teaching which meets their identified needs.

The curriculum is well supported by policies which provide an overview of each subject and are supplemented by good schemes of work. Curriculum plans make good reference to information and communication technology (ICT) and focus clearly on the progression of key skills. Teachers ensure continuity in mathematics by using a commercial scheme. They make good use of the school environment, the available resources and the display of pupils' work to support learning.

The quality of teaching is good and accounts for pupils' positive attitudes to learning and their good progress. All parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that the teaching benefits their children. Teachers expect their pupils to work hard and behave well. Pupils feel secure and happy in class and are well behaved.

In the most effective lessons, realistic objectives are identified, appropriate teaching methods are used and activities are well matched to pupils' needs. These lessons are imbued with a clear sense of purpose and there is a sharp focus on what pupils should learn. Explanations and instructions are clear. In the less successful lessons activities are overly directed by the teacher, with too few opportunities for pupils to think and learn for themselves.

Teachers and teaching assistants form good teams, whose individual members respond promptly to the needs of pupils as they arise. Every pupil is heard to read daily. Together with the systematic teaching of phonics and regular

opportunities to develop reading comprehension, this underpins the high standards achieved in reading and spelling.

In the three classes of pupils under five years of age the activities are structured to encourage good social and creative play. Interesting and imaginative activities and good opportunities for independent learning ensure that pupils make a good start in acquiring basic skills in all aspects of literacy, numeracy and ICT.

Assessment procedures are thorough. Good use is made of observational assessment throughout the school. Sensitive and constructive feedback is offered to pupils during lessons, instilling confidence. However, currently the school does not use the information analytically to identify strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum, or to set appropriately challenging targets in all subjects. The school has identified this as an area for development and is considering various options to improve the provision.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils is good. It is reflected in the pupils' level of confidence, social relationships and their good behaviour. The care shown by staff to pupils is of the highest order and results in pupils developing self-esteem and gaining a balanced awareness of the world around them.

The school's core values are affirmed by the development of pupils' moral understanding and sensitivity. Pupils' moral development is encouraged through the curriculum and also by the good role models of adults in the school. Pupils have a well-developed sense of right and wrong from an early age.

Pupils' social skills are fostered effectively. They take part in all activities enthusiastically and are pleased with what the school offers them. They feel valued and report that the school deals quickly with their concerns. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility and to contribute to the school community. When they are the special monitor for the day they take their duties very seriously indeed.

The school provides pupils with a wide range of opportunities to appreciate their own cultural traditions and the diversity and richness of those of others. Festivals such as Diwali, Easter and the Chinese New Year encourage pupils to appreciate the values and beliefs of those from cultures other than their own.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The standard of care is good. The school takes its responsibility for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils seriously. The school is an orderly community and pupils are well supervised at all times. Parents believe that their children are treated fairly and with respect and that they are safe and well cared for. The curriculum and the outdoor facilities promote the notion of healthy eating and regular exercise effectively.

There is a good range of policies and procedures which provide support and guidance to staff. Appropriate risk assessments are routinely carried out. Each half term a fire drill is organised with an appropriate log kept of practices. However, a fire risk assessment has not been carried out on the premises since 1999. The school recognises the need to rectify this immediately and has commissioned a commercial company to do the assessment.

Suitable child protection procedures are in place. There is a designated child protection officer and staff have attended relevant training courses. The school implements its anti-bullying policy effectively; pupils are confident that the school would help them to resolve any issue quickly.

The school meets the accessibility requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has appropriate and effective procedures for the appointment of staff. Prior to their appointment, checks are instituted to confirm their suitability to work with children, their prior experience, medical fitness and professional qualifications.

The school's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are leased from the local authority. They are suitable for their purpose and are well cared for by pupils and staff. Pupils' work and achievement are celebrated in attractive displays around the school.

Classrooms are small and storage is a constant problem for the school. It uses the space available as efficiently as possible. There are sufficient washrooms for the number of pupils on roll. However, these provide insufficient privacy for pupils and should be improved. The school is taking immediate action to upgrade these facilities.

The grounds are thoughtfully planned and equipped with an interesting and challenging range of equipment for outdoor learning and recreation, including shaded areas for sunny days.

The school last received a visit from the environmental health authority in 2005. However, there is a need for more rigorous procedures to be adopted when preparing and serving food. All staff should be fully conversant with the expected hygiene standards. The school acknowledges this matter and has taken immediate steps to address it appropriately.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school's relationship with parents is good and this close involvement is confirmed by the parents in discussion and in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires. Strong links with parents are at the heart of all the school does.

There are good informal links and the staff are accessible to parents on a daily basis. The school prospectus provides a wealth of information and the regular newsletters keep parents informed of events and developments in the school. Parents' evenings are organised twice each year when parents have the opportunity to meet all staff who work with their children. At the beginning of each school year, the staff explain the aims and expectations for each year group to the parents. These effective strategies help to consolidate a home/school partnership which is the essence of the school's philosophy of education.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a written complaints procedure which meets the requirements. It is available to parents. The school has had no complaints requiring a panel meeting to date.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- ensure a satisfactory level of fire safety, identified by a thorough risk assessment under the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997 (paragraph 3(5)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- ensure that appropriate hygienic procedures are established in the preparation and serving of food (paragraph 5(m)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- build on the existing good practice to implement a more coherent assessment framework so that pupils' achievement and progress can be tracked accurately from the youngest to the oldest class, using the data to set appropriately challenging targets for pupils in all subjects.
- improve the quality of the washroom facilities in order to provide greater privacy for pupils using them.

School details

Name of school	Athelstan House School		
DfES number	318/6060		
Unique reference number	102941		
Type of school	Pre-preparatory and nursery school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1983		
Age range of pupils	2-7years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 17	Girls: 20	Total: 37
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 13	Girls: 9	Total: 22
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,195		
Address of school	Athelstan House School 36 Percy Road Hampton Middlesex TW12 2LA		
Telephone number	020 8979 1045		
Fax number	0871 433 7851		
Email address	admin@athelstanhouseschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Ms Elsa Woolf		
Proprietor	Ms Elsa Woolf		
Reporting inspector	Ms Pauline Hoey AI		
Dates of inspection	30-31 January 2007		