



Educare Small School

Independent School

Inspection report

**Better
education
and care**

DfES Registration Number 314/6070
Unique Reference Number 131351
Inspection number 296804
Inspection dates 30-31 January 2007
Reporting inspector Mr R Kapadia HMI

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 3-11	Published 23 February 2007	Reference no. 296804
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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

Educare Small School is an innovative school which offers parents an alternative to large communities with an education that addresses the whole development of each child. It is housed in a carefully adapted building with a small external playground. Over its ten years of existence, it has grown from 3 to over 40 children with its direct focus on children's holistic development; there are currently no children diagnosed as having special educational needs. The school aims for its children to be independent learners and thinkers with an enthusiasm for learning who are able to organise their own learning effectively, make choices and interact within a stimulating and creative environment.

Evaluation of the school

Educare Small School is generally successful in meeting its aims. It provides a good quality of education in a supportive environment on a small scale where pupils enjoy coming to school and gain self-confidence. Good teaching of the carefully planned curriculum enables pupils to make sound academic progress. The school's distinctive focus on all-round development is very successful in promoting pupils' social and moral development, as well as in providing an exceptionally safe and healthy environment in which children grow emotionally. The school meets nearly all of the independent school regulations.

Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory with some rather unusual features, including a strong emphasis on topic work as well as on personal, social and health education (PSHE). A broad range of subjects are studied, as well the Alexander Technique which helps pupils learn about balancing the body in order to promote personal and emotional development. Currently the overall time to study subjects in the National Curriculum is slightly low, particularly for mathematics. Nevertheless the curriculum fulfils the school's aim to give children a balanced education by addressing their all round development; individuality is encouraged and fostered.

The school is not selective in the children it admits and does not have precise information on their prior attainment. Children are grouped in three mixed age classes - Foundation Stage, Key Stage One and Key Stage Two, with ability

groups for literacy and mathematics teaching. The school uses the National Curriculum and the Early Learning Goals as its basis for medium and long-term planning. The Early Learning Goals and most subjects in the primary phase are taught through different topics over the year. Careful records are kept to ensure that children study different topics as they move through the school.

The school has good policies to promote equal opportunities. It succeeds in building a partnership between teachers, parents, children and community members, stressing that education is a lifelong process. There is an after-school club, but extra-curricular activities are limited, partly because of the size of the school.

The quality of teaching is good and based on carefully planned and focused activities to capture the interest and imagination of children. All the lessons seen were at least satisfactory and many were good. Teachers offer good individual explanation and promote constructive discussion. Relationships are good. Pupils concentrate well and show interest: as one parent noted, *'my child is always full of what he did in school in the day.'*

A practical creative approach makes learning enjoyable and fosters good motivation amongst all pupils. The emphasis on small group work enables each child to have a voice to express opinions and to speak freely and confidently. Speaking and listening skills of the children are good. Pupils concentrate well, and for long periods of time on the extended tasks which are set, such as studying rocks or making electrical circuits.

Resources to support teaching and learning are satisfactory, but information and communication technology (ICT) is not used sufficiently systematically across the school. Systems for assessment are detailed but could be used more regularly to plan progression in the work which is set. Pupils are usually given similar tasks, particularly in topic work; targets for improvement are not set currently.

The school keeps a good range of pupils' work which shows satisfactory progress. It also keeps records to show pupils' emotional and social development. The school does use national tests but these are not marked or moderated externally; the results indicate good progress in aspects of English and sound progress in mathematics. The latest nursery inspection report noted children's good progress towards the Early Learning goals.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. There are strengths in the approach to social development where careful efforts

are made to include a range of appropriate and unusual activities. Each session starts with a 'movement circle' consisting of a range of relaxing exercises and chanting or singing, to ensure that children are suitably prepared for learning. This helps children concentrate on activities which are set and also to focus on how to learn.

Children are involved in making decisions and are encouraged to offer ideas and opinions such as for the tenth anniversary of the school or on arrangements for lunch time. There are regular opportunities for circle time, which effectively promote moral development. Children noted that bullying is rare and everyone gets on well with each other. Behaviour is very good. However, attendance is relatively low at 91.6%, mainly because of the authorised holidays which are taken by a few parents during the school term.

Religious education does not feature strongly in the curriculum but there are opportunities, such as in art and some topic work, for spiritual development. Children are taken on outside visits locally such as to a Tudor house in Cheam linked to a history project and the Natural History Museum whilst studying dinosaurs. They walk to facilities for physical education and use public transport for trips. They have also been involved with external and charitable projects such as supporting the Hope Flowers School in Palestine, near its border with Israel. Cultural development is promoted but more use could be made of the school's own community and its location near London.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. The school gives high priority to pupils' welfare. Pupils feel very safe and are comfortable in approaching an adult if they have a problem.

The school ensures that achieving good health is part of its regular curriculum. It has a comprehensive water and healthy food policy, linked to the holistic development of children. There are clear and sensible expectations about children's packed lunches for a balanced meal with fruit and unsweetened drinks, with a ban on crisps, chocolates and fizzy drinks, which are also observed by staff. Correct posture is stressed in learning activities such as hand-writing.

The school has carefully devised procedures in its effective behaviour policy which incorporates an anti-bullying policy. Health and safety are taken seriously and all the relevant policies are in place and implemented systematically. There has been recent training in child protection on a multi-agency course and also for First Aid. Written policies deal with fire and emergency procedures, as well as for dealing with crises and accidents. Risk assessments are undertaken annually with actions taken to correct deficiencies where necessary. Staff deployment ensures proper supervision of pupils at all times. The admissions

book and attendance registers are maintained carefully. The school has complied with disability discrimination legislation since it opened ten years ago.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All staff in the school have been subject to satisfactory clearance at an enhanced level with the Criminal Records Bureau. Prior to confirmation of any appointment, references are sought, and there are checks to ensure an applicant's proof of identity, qualifications and medical fitness. Records are kept in one place, following the latest guidance. The headteacher, who also established the school, undertakes self-evaluation regularly and there are regular opportunities for in-service training.

School's premises and accommodation

The school is an oasis near the centre of a bustling town centre. There are two main classrooms and a small but adequate playground. Local facilities are used for physical education twice a week. There is a dedicated area for ICT and a small library. The classroom for the nursery children has a suitable range of areas to promote each of the Early Learning goals. The other classroom is also used as a hall. The furniture has been specially selected to improve children's posture. There are attractive and thoughtful displays which create a positive learning environment and relate well to the topics being studied. The school has sufficient toilets but there is no bed for pupils who are ill. The space for outside play, whilst small, is used to maximum benefit by the provision of a wide range of play equipment.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school has a prospectus which provides a good range of information for parents. Parents receive detailed annual reports regarding their child's progress and there are also consultation evenings to discuss progress. The written reports make reference to performance against National Curriculum levels in the core subjects. There was a high return rate (over 80%) for the parental questionnaire. The responses were overwhelmingly positive, with over four fifths of parents strongly agreeing on most questions. The school provides parents with the necessary information on all aspects except one; this small school does not yet provide information on the academic progress of its pupils in the preceding school year.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a clear policy relating to informal and formal complaints. These are handled effectively, as evident from the parental questionnaires: there have been no formal complaints in the last few years.

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 the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide suitable facilities for children who are sick (paragraph 5(l)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- prepare and make available particulars of academic performance each year (paragraph 6(2)(i)).

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:

- consider the time allocation for each subject in the curriculum
- analyse pupils' academic progress more systematically and set pupils targets for improvement.

School details

Name of school	Educare Small School		
DfES number	314/6070		
Unique reference number	131351		
Type of school	Primary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	March 1997		
Age range of pupils	3-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 20	Girls: 16	Total: 36
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 2	Girls: 4	Total: 6
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3330		
Address of school	Educare Small School 12 Cowleaze Road Kingston Upon Thames Surrey KT2 6DZ		
Telephone number	0208 547 0144		
Fax number	0208 546 5901		
Email address	educaresmall@btconnect.com		
Headteacher	Mrs E Steintal		
Proprietor	Educare Small School Trust		
Reporting inspector	Mr R Kapadia HMI		
Dates of inspection	30-31 January 2007		