

Kitebrook House

Independent School

Inspection report

DfES Registration Number	931/6118
Unique Reference Number	132013
Inspection number	296833
Inspection dates	14-15 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Michael Best 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).

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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

Kitebrook House is a co-educational school for boys and girls aged three to eight years, and for girls from eight to 13 years. It occupies two substantial country properties, converted for educational use, near Moreton in the Marsh. There are 101 pupils on the school's roll. The school was established by the principal in 1955 in Somerset and moved to its present location in 1959. The pre-preparatory department is based at Hillside, just over a mile from the main site at Kitebrook which houses the preparatory department. Weekly and flexible boarding is available for pupils in the preparatory department. Both departments are set in extensive grounds, which are used for recreation and sporting activities. A small proportion of pupils speaks English as an additional language. The school aims to: *'Look at each child's needs, and each child's potential, and to provide a secure and loving – yet challenging – background in which all the children can fully thrive and develop'*.

Evaluation of the school

Kitebrook House is a good school that fulfils its aims. Teaching and learning are good and pupils make good progress. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is outstanding. Parents and pupils are positive about the school's work. Pupils successfully develop their confidence and self-esteem and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. There is, however, significant non-compliance with the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum. Children in the nursery and Reception classes (the Foundation Stage) enjoy a broad range of activities that cover all the recommended areas of learning for the under-fives. In a happy supportive setting, they learn to work and play together. There is an effective balance between adult-led and child-chosen activities, with a good emphasis on developing children's communication and language skills. The curriculum in Years 1, 2 and 3 successfully builds on these foundations. There is a particular focus on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, and encouraging their creative development through art and music. Pupils study science, history and

geography through termly topics. The requirements of the Common Entrance examinations determine the curriculum for pupils in the preparatory school. In addition, all pupils study art, information and communication technology, music, religious education and physical education. Pupils' personal, social and health education is incorporated into individual subjects and developed in form periods.

The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities in sport and the arts and pupils regularly take part in competitive and friendly matches with other schools. The school offers tuition and external examinations in music. Visits and visitors support pupils' learning. Traditionally, class and subject teachers have individually planned, delivered and assessed the subjects they teach. Building on the good collaborative practice developing with the nursery and reception classes, staff from both sites are working together to establish a common format for subject policies and schemes of work. They are seeking to improve and develop the continuity and progression in pupils' learning as they move through the school. Resources for teaching and learning are good overall but some library books are dated and teachers too often rely on photocopied commercial materials to support their lessons.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Relationships between staff and pupils are often outstanding and these promote a positive and productive working atmosphere. Lessons are conducted at a good pace and well managed so that pupils make good progress. Pupils are very keen and interested, eager to ask and answer questions. They work hard, apply themselves diligently and produce neat work. They readily help each other and have little hesitation in asking staff for guidance if they are unsure what to do next. Staff provide good support for pupils for whom English is an additional language. In the younger classes, pupils develop good working habits by sharing equipment, discussing what they are doing and sustaining their involvement in an activity. In the senior classes, practical work is well organised, with pupils actively involved in planning and carrying out investigations. They use the correct subject vocabulary, make reasoned observations and reflect thoughtfully on what they see and hear.

Assessment is satisfactory overall. There is some good practice evident but, at present, no consistent and agreed approach to assessment across the school or as to how it will be used in planning to inform the next steps in pupils' learning. Teachers make good use of questions to check pupils' learning. Test results and practice examination papers help teachers to identify the strengths and shortcomings in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Pupils' work is regularly marked, sometimes with helpful comments to guide pupils to improve their performance. Termly reports to parents are detailed and they often highlight where pupils need to focus their efforts. Assessment arrangements at the end of the Foundation Stage comply with requirements but, in other year groups,

the school does not have in place a framework to evaluate pupil performance by reference to its own aims or national norms.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The school makes outstanding provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding. Staff have consistently high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attendance. Pupils respond very well; they are polite, extremely well mannered and welcoming to visitors. Pupils say that they are happy at school, and in their response to the inspection questionnaire, parents overwhelmingly agree with this. Pupils much appreciate the respect and concern the staff demonstrate for them and reciprocate this in their dealings with adults and each other. In and out of lessons, pupils are keen, confident and enthusiastic.

Pupils reflect very thoughtfully on what they see and hear, particularly in assemblies. They develop a good understanding of their own and other cultures and enthusiastically support charities. Pupils readily enter into discussion or debate on a range of topics but show sensitivity and graciousness in how they seek and value each other's views and opinions. Pupils assume responsibility for classroom routines and older pupils conscientiously undertake duties at meal times and in assemblies. Visits and visitors help pupils to develop their understanding of local and national institutions and services. Regular opportunities to represent the school in the arts and at sporting events help pupils to develop their understanding and enjoyment of working together in a team.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Although staff know and care well for their pupils, the school's overall provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils is inadequate. This is because its arrangements do not comply with a significant number of regulations. Written policies are either not in place or do not reflect current requirements. Form teachers provide pastoral support for pupils and take overall responsibility for their personal development. There is good support for boarders. Supervision is good and the school works closely with parents. Pupils feel safe and say that there is always an adult to turn to if they need help. Pupils with learning difficulties are identified at an early stage and supported. Pupils follow a healthy lifestyle, with plenty of opportunities to take part in physical activities. They make informed choices about healthy eating.

The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour. However, there is no guiding policy to ensure consistency of management or to outline any sanctions. There is a written policy for preventing bullying but it does not reflect

current national guidelines. No formal record is kept of any serious incidents of misbehaviour, bullying or racism or of the school's response. The school's written health and safety policy and the arrangements for making risk assessments for all visits away from school also fail to reflect current requirements. Registers are taken regularly and the school keeps its admission register up to date but there are some inconsistencies in the application of the most recent regulations. Procedures for regularly testing fire alarms and carrying out evacuation drills are now in place but not all emergency exit routes are clearly indicated. There is no written first aid policy. The school has not prepared or implemented policies for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils in accordance with the regulations and, in consequence, does not reflect the requirements of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. The school does not have appropriate regard for the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school's procedures for checking the identity, qualifications and suitability of new staff prior to their appointment do not meet the regulations. There are also significant gaps in the information recorded about existing staff.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are maintained to a good standard. There are suitable specialist teaching facilities for science and art. Rooms are warm and well lit and pupils' work is attractively displayed around the school. There are suitable facilities for pupils who are ill. There are appropriate numbers of toilets and washbasins but those for use by staff and visitors are not clearly indicated. The school makes good use of facilities within its grounds for games lessons and pupils' recreation and uses nearby facilities for swimming and other sporting activities.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The information provided for parents and prospective parents does not meet all the requirements. Attractively designed newsletters are very informative. Written termly reports provide a detailed picture of what each pupil has achieved and highlight areas for further improvement. The prospectus provides some basic information about the school and its ethos but does not include all the information required by the regulations.

Procedures for handling complaints

Most parents say they are comfortable about approaching the school with any problems. Contrary to regulations, the school does not have a written complaints procedure.

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 curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- establish a framework to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and utilise information from such assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress (paragraph 1(3)(g))
- establish a framework by which pupil performance can be evaluated by reference to either the school's own aims, as provided to parents and/or, by national norms (paragraph 1(4)).

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

- prepare and implement written policies to:
 - prevent bullying which has regard to the DfES guidance '*Bullying: don't suffer in silence*' (paragraph 3(2)(a))
 - safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with DfES guidance '*Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education*' (2007) (paragraph 3(2)(b))
 - ensure the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school which has regard to DfES guidance '*Health and safety of pupils on educational visits*' (paragraph 3(2)(c))
 - promote good behaviour amongst pupils which sets out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving (paragraph 3(2)(d))

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- have regard to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (paragraph 3(3))
 - have regard to the DfES guidance *'Health and safety: responsibilities and powers'* (paragraph 3(4))
 - ensure a satisfactory level of fire safety, identified by its risk assessment under the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997, and by any report from the Fire Authority (paragraph 3(5))
 - have a satisfactory written policy on first aid and implement this (paragraph 3(6))
 - keep written records of sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious disciplinary offences (paragraph 3(8))
 - maintain an admission register and an attendance register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 3(9)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff:
 - undertake checks with the Criminal Records Bureau to confirm their suitability to work with children (paragraph 4(b))
 - carry out appropriate checks to confirm their identity, medical fitness, previous employment history, character references and, where appropriate, qualifications and professional references and take such information into account in determining whether their appointment will be confirmed (paragraph 4(c))
- comply with Standard 38 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (paragraph 4(d)).

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

- provide:
 - particulars of the name of the headteacher (paragraph 6(2)(a))

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- the proprietor's full name, address for correspondence during both term time and holidays and a telephone number or numbers on which the proprietor may be contacted at all times (paragraph 6(2)(b))
 - particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for admissions, discipline and exclusions (paragraph 6(2)(e))
 - provide particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements of special educational need and for pupils for whom English is an additional language (paragraph 6(2)(f))
 - ensure that parents are aware they can request:
 - particulars of the curriculum offered by the school (paragraph 6(2)(g))
 - particulars of policies relating to bullying, child protection, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour and sanctions adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving (paragraph 6(2)(h))
 - particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations (paragraph 6(2)(i))
 - details of the complaints procedure adopted by the school, together with details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j))
 - the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 6(2)(k)).

The school does not meet the requirements in respect of procedures for handling complaints (standard 7) and must:

- ensure that the school has a written complaints procedure (paragraph 7(a)) that
 - is available on request to parents of pupils and prospective pupils (paragraph 7(b))
 - sets out clear timescales for the management of the complaint (paragraph 7(c))

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- allows for complaints to be made and considered initially on an informal basis (paragraph 7(d))
 - provides for a formal complaint to be made in writing if parents are not satisfied with the response to an informal complaint (paragraph 7(e))
 - provides, if the parents are not satisfied with the response to a written complaint, for the establishment of a hearing before a panel appointed by the proprietor of at least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint (paragraph 7(f))
 - ensures, where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, that one person on the panel is independent of the management and running of the school (paragraph 7(g))
 - allows for parents to attend the panel hearing, and, if they wish, to be accompanied (paragraph 7(h))
 - provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulates that the complainant, proprietors and headteachers, and, where relevant, the person complained about, should be given a copy of any findings and recommendations (paragraph 7(i))
 - provides for written records to be kept of all complaints indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage, or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing (paragraph 7(j))
 - provides that correspondence, statements and records of complaints are to be kept confidential (paragraph 7(k))
 - complies with Standard 5 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (paragraph 7(l)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

School details

Name of school	Kitebrook House		
DfES number	931/6118		
Unique reference number	132013		
Type of school	Pre-preparatory and preparatory		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1955		
Age range of pupils	3-13		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 20	Girls: 70	Total: 90
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 4	Girls: 7	Total: 11
Number of boarders	Boys: 0	Girls: (varies nightly)	Total:
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	From £3,795 to £8,880		
Annual fees (boarders)	£11,850		
Telephone number	01608 674350		
Fax number	01608 674887		
Email address	office@kitebrookhouse.com		
Principal	Mrs Anne McDermott		
Proprietor	Mrs Anne McDermott		
Reporting inspector	Mr Michael Best		
Dates of inspection	14-15 March 2007		