

Roxeth Mead School

Independent School

Inspection report

DfES Registration Number	310/6064
Unique Reference Number	102254
Inspection number	296863
Inspection dates	13-14 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Armitage 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).

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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

Roxeth Mead School is a popular, small independent pre-preparatory school with a Nursery for pupils aged from 3 to 7. There are currently 50 pupils on roll, including 18 in the Nursery. The school was founded in 1859. It is situated in Harrow in north-west London in an attractive, converted house and surrounding gardens, including a hard play area. It is a Christian foundation but there are pupils from other faiths in the school. Pupils come with a wide range of abilities. Currently, there are three who have English as an additional language (EAL). The school's aim is to maximise each pupil's potential in both their personal and academic development. The school prides itself in the fact that because it is small, it is able to give each pupil the help it needs. The school prepares pupils for entrance examinations to all the independent preparatory schools in the area. The school was last inspected in 2001.

Evaluation of the school

Roxeth Mead School provides pupils with good education and care. It provides a supportive, caring environment that is not complacent. It ensures that pupils progress well, both academically and in their personal development. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good; their academic progress is well illustrated by their success in entrance examinations to local schools. Pupils are well prepared for the next phase in their education.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. Its principal feature is that because classes are small, it is well-matched to the needs of the pupils. In the Nursery, pupils enjoy a wide range of activities including painting, cookery, music, physical education (PE), and the use of sand, play-dough and water. They are encouraged to write and read. Facilities for outdoor play are good.

In the Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classes, pupils experience an increasingly formalised and advanced curriculum. Literacy and numeracy are taught daily and the full range of other subjects, at least once a week. Personal, social and health education is linked effectively with religious education and is also taught

weekly. Information and communication technology is underdeveloped as it is not used sufficiently in all subjects of the curriculum.

The curriculum is enriched with a range of visits and after-school activities, the latter introduced only recently; for example, during the inspection, all pupils in Reception and Years 1 and 2 were preparing successfully for a visit to Hampton Court and a ballet class took place in the hall after school. In the summer term, the whole school will visit Woburn Safari Park. At the end of the school year, there is Speech Day at which pupils sing, recite and perform a short musical.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall and some outstanding teaching was seen during the inspection. As a result pupils make good progress. Teachers know their pupils' strengths and weaknesses and match their teaching closely to the needs of each pupil. Their knowledge and understanding of pupils' achievements and how they can improve are well illustrated by the lengthy, reflective reports they produce on each pupil twice a year. It is equally well illustrated by the extra support given to pupils such as those with EAL.

Teachers have high expectations but they proceed gently and patiently, moving pupils on at an appropriate pace. In doing this, they also make learning fun, making the most of resources and pupils' questions and interests. However, sometimes, opportunities to challenge pupils even more are missed. In part, this is due to a number of factors, including the absence of a written curriculum policy document, a lack of uniform schemes of work and considerable variation in the quality of teachers' lesson planning. In addition, there is no uniform use by teachers of assessment data to inform their planning. It is also due to the fact that there is currently no systematic quality assurance monitoring of lessons by either the headteacher or other staff.

Because of the good curriculum and the good teaching, pupils' learning is also mostly good. A striking feature is the way in which learning comes naturally to pupils; they want to learn and so they work very well with teachers. During the inspection, there were a number of instances where the learning was quite stunning – for example, pupils from Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 used their knowledge effectively to ask salient questions about the motivation of Henry VIII. Another more general example was the consistency of pupils' willingness to listen – to their teachers and to their peers. This contributes considerably to their success. There is occasionally some naughtiness but this is quickly sorted out, often by the pupils themselves.

Given their ability to learn, teachers do not always give pupils sufficient responsibility for their own learning – to ask questions, find things out, reach conclusions and communicate these. At present, teachers sometimes do a little too much for their pupils.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual development is good. Pupils' develop markedly in confidence, sensitivity and understanding as they grow older. A group of pupils of all ages was interviewed formally by an inspector. All the pupils, even the younger ones, spoke confidently and with meaning. They all had good understanding of concepts such as friendship, happiness and sadness. All were able to express very clear views about the school. They take responsibility and handle this well; for example, pupils who are monitors fulfil their tasks maturely.

Pupils' moral development is good. They have very clear views on important issues; for example, in one class when pupils expressed very firm views on the evils of racism and the lack of rights for women in the past. Likewise, pupils' social development is also good. They work well together and are not afraid to express their ideas or answer questions. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds work and play very happily together.

Pupils' cultural development is good. They have a good grounding in many aspects of their local and wider British and European culture through the use of books, music, and local visits. Pupils have a good knowledge of different religions, brought to life by pupils from different religions being represented in school.

Behaviour at the school is outstanding; attendance is very good and pupils very much enjoy school and learning. Through both their academic work and personal development, they are developing knowledge and skills which will ensure their future economic well-being. They contribute positively to the wider community; for example, through charity fund raising and links with a home for the elderly.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

In practice, arrangements to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils are good. The school has a good record of support for pupils with different needs and it liaises well with appropriate outside agencies. However, the school has not yet written some of the required policies and not all staff have been trained in child protection.

Pupils are very aware of issues such as healthy eating and the taking of exercise. They are also safety conscious and use equipment carefully. For example, when using safety needles to use in work with fabrics. They walk sensibly about school, especially on the stairs. The school has reviewed accessibility for pupils in accordance with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and made improvements.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All staff are checked with the Criminal Records Bureau to ensure their suitability to work with children. However, other recruitment procedures are unclear and do not follow current national guidance. The school has no systematic evidence of identity checks, medical checks, previous employment history, and character references.

School's premises and accommodation

The accommodation makes a very positive contribution to pupils' education. It is in good condition and examples of pupils' work enhance the environment. The surrounding grounds are put to very good use for PE and sports day. They also help to develop pupils' aesthetic awareness because of their beauty; for example, the leaves on the willow tree just beginning to open was something upon which pupils commented. The ICT suite is dull and has unsuitable furniture, in particular chairs which ensure that pupils are correctly seated in relation to screens.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

There is very good informal contact between staff and parents. In their responses to the questionnaires sent to parents before the inspection, almost all said they were happy with the information provided. A few who are normally unavailable in the daytime said they would like more formal parents' evenings. The school provides a good range of information for parents and prospective parents but some required information is not given; for example, particulars of policies relating to bullying, child protection, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour, sanctions in the event of pupils' misbehaving and a summary of staff qualifications.

Procedures for handling complaints

Although there have been no recorded, formal complaints in recent years, the school does not meet the regulations because there is no 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:

- provide and implement effectively a curriculum policy set out in writing which is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work (paragraph 1(2)).

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

- ensure that all staff attend the required training in child protection issues in compliance with DfES guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education* (2007) (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- prepare and implement a written policy relating to 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))
- keep a written record of sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious disciplinary offences (paragraph 3(8)).

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

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff, have appropriate checks carried out to confirm their identity, medical fitness, previous employment history, character references and, where appropriate, qualifications and professional references and take this information into account before confirming their appointment (paragraph 4 (c))

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

- where the proprietor is an individual, provide his full name, address for correspondence during both term time and holidays and a telephone number or numbers on which he may be contacted at all times, or, where the proprietor is a corporation, a Scottish firm or a body of persons, the address and telephone number of its registered or principal office (paragraph 6(2)(b))
- where there is a board of governors, provide the name and address for correspondence of its Chair. (paragraph 6(2)(c)).
- Provide particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for admissions, discipline and exclusions. (paragraph 6(2)(e)).

- make it clear that 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 are available on request (paragraph 6(2)(h)).
- make it clear that particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations are available on request (paragraph 6(2)(i)).
- make it clear that 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 are available on request (paragraph 6(2)(j)).
- make it clear that the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications are available on request (paragraph 6(2)(k)).

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

- set out details of the timescales for the management of a complaint (paragraph 7(c)).
- make clear to parents that if they are not satisfied with the response to a written complaint, there is provision 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)).
- ensure that where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one person on the panel will be independent of the management and running of the school (paragraph 7(g)).
- ensure that the complaints procedure provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulates that the complainant, proprietors and headteacher, and, where relevant, the person complained about, will be given a copy of any findings and recommendations (paragraph 7(i)).
- ensure that the procedure 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)).

- ensure that correspondence, statements and records of complaints are to be kept confidential (paragraph 7(k)).

School details

Name of school	Roxeth Mead School		
DfES number	310/6064		
Unique reference number	102254		
Type of school	Pre-preparatory school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1859		
Age range of pupils	3-7		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 19	Girls: 21	Total: 40
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 6	Girls: 4	Total: 10
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,760		
Address of school	25 Middle Road Harrow Middlesex HA2 0HW		
Telephone number	0208 422 2092		
Fax number	0208 4264974		
Email address	info@roxethmead.com		
Headteacher	Mrs A Isaacs		
Proprietor	Roxeth Mead (Buckholt) Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Mr Paul Armitage HMI		
Dates of inspection	13-14 March 2007		