



The Academy School

Independent School

Inspection report

**Better
education
and care**

DfES Registration Number 202/6396
Unique Reference Number 131291
Inspection number 299778
Inspection dates 23-24 January 2007
Reporting inspector Steffi Penny 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 6-12	Published 16 February 2007	Reference no. 299778
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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

The Academy School is a co-educational preparatory school providing for children aged six to thirteen years. It is situated in a quiet location off Rosslyn Hill in the centre of Hampstead. Established in 1997 by the current proprietors the premises continue to be leased from the Unitarian Chapel. There are 71 children on roll. Children are accepted at any point in the academic year and at any point in their academic career.

The school aims 'to give pupils the confidence and grounding they require in order to meet their objectives and achieve entrance into their next schools seeking to meet every child's individual needs integrating them into the school community and into flexible programmes of school work. Within a culture of mutual respect and equality, the school also aims for the children to value themselves as the individuals they are'. The last inspection was carried out in October 2002.

Evaluation of the school

Pupils are given what they need to have a successful and prosperous future through receiving a good education in a caring, friendly, family atmosphere. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school community helps to produce happy children with high self-esteem who make good and often excellent progress. Because they are well taught, and are thoroughly engaged in their learning, pupils are confident to join the secondary schools appropriate to each child. Parents are unanimously supportive of the work that the school does. The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

Quality of education

The school provides a good quality of education. The approaches taken to develop and cater for pupils' social and academic skills are well balanced and highly effective. In practice the curriculum is effective, broad and coherent. Plans and schemes of work show topics covered and often relate to published schemes such as the Common Entrance Examination syllabuses. These do not provide detailed centralised schemes that can support colleagues new to the school. Similarly, they do not provide a tight monitoring record of the coverage

and progression in pupils' understanding and of cross-curricular themes and use of information and communication technology (ICT).

The quality of teaching is generally good and sometimes outstanding. In the best lessons teaching is inspirational, driven at a quick pace, sharply focussed on the lesson objectives but drawing from a wealth of knowledge that fully explains the relevance of what is being learned. Pupils said that they really enjoy all their lessons, especially mathematics, because the teachers' enjoyment and love of their subjects is so evident. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and provide appropriate challenge and support to cater for the individual needs of pupils in their classes. Pupils with learning difficulties and those who have encountered problems in other schools are supported well to progress at their own pace with good quality support. ICT resources remain limited.

Assessment has improved since the last inspection and is satisfactory. It is based on individual teachers' knowledge of their pupils alongside commercially produced benchmark tests. The school has begun to develop formal tracking procedures to enable it to demonstrate more effectively the value added by the school. Whilst at the early stages it provides evidence to show good and outstanding achievement for pupils.

Pupils' progress is good and often outstanding. A clear focus on the development of fundamental skills in English and Mathematics allows pupils to make exceptional progress in these areas and reach very high standards. Speaking and listening skills are also excellent. Pupils are confident to express their views on a wide range of topics and make valuable contributions in class discussions. Pupils are highly articulate and have extensive vocabularies.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The development of pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural understanding is an outstanding feature of this school. The high priority given to helping the pupils develop more confidence in their own abilities also helps them to develop a greater sense of self-worth. The parents and pupils appreciate the difference that the school has made to them, speaking readily of their profound appreciation. One parent summed up the views of many saying, 'the school gave my child supreme confidence to be able to attack everything with gusto. The skills they showed her in caring for others and working in groups are also really appreciated by her next school'.

Provision for pupils' social and moral development is excellent. Pupils play well together and when new to the school quickly learn to enjoy each others' company. As one pupil aptly explained, 'if you are a small person in this school

it soon makes you feel big'. There is a strong emphasis on living in a community and taking account of the needs of others. The staff make every effort to reinforce positive attitudes and behaviour; acting as excellent role models that pupils successfully emulate. Behaviour is good.

Opportunities for spiritual and cultural development are successfully exploited, for example through, music, the arts and visits to London's museums and galleries. Pupils readily demonstrate their understanding and growth in these areas to each other through scholastic recitals and whole-school productions such as the school performance of an adaptation of Charles Dickens' 'Oliver' in 2006. The curriculum also supports the development of the appreciation of other cultures and the school recognises that this is an area that could be developed further.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of children is good. Staff show a strong and genuine commitment to children's welfare. The school has a full range of policies and practices that minimise the health and safety risks to pupils. Procedures for the administration of First Aid are rigorous and the school benefits greatly from having a qualified nurse on the staff.

The school has a very effective anti-bullying policy. Pupils report that sometimes pupils say unkind things to each other but that these are quickly dealt with; as one pupil said, 'you may think you have an enemy but after a while that person is your friend.' Children know how to keep safe and say that they feel safe in school recognising that there is someone to whom they can turn if they feel worried. The pupils unanimously appreciate the work and support of the school counsellor.

Pupils demonstrate through discussion that they understand and know how to keep healthy and follow healthy lifestyles. However, sometimes they forget and bring fizzy drinks and crisps in their tuck boxes.

The school meets its responsibilities to provide access to the school and the curriculum for pupils who have disabilities.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school undertakes the full range of checks to ensure the suitability of all staff to work with children and young people.

School's premises and accommodation

The school operates from attractive buildings that have the feel of a family house and create the campus feeling of a traditional 'village' school. The size of

each room is constrained and cannot be altered due to planning restrictions. Nevertheless, they are appropriate for the activities which take place in them. The 17th Century chapel, complete with windows designed by William Morris and freezes created by Josiah Wedgwood, is effectively used to inspire pupils when used as a classroom as well as providing a magnificent backdrop for musical and dramatic productions and for assemblies. The hall provides good space for indoor sporting activities, break and lunch. The bases of the supporting pillars have no padding to reduce possible injuries. The library is in a central position and has a good range of books. They are not organised through a classification system with the consequence that the speed at which pupils can access books is slowed and library skills are not reinforced.

Additionally pupils have access to a recreational hall and swimming pool on a regular basis. The school is well situated for the theatres and museums of central London, of which it takes good advantage.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides a good range of information for parents, pupils and carers inspectors, Ofsted and the DfES on request that comply with all of the relevant regulations. Communication between home and school is highly valued by parents and the school.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's complaints procedure meets all the requirements for registration. The complaints procedures are clear, fair and understood by the school community.

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

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

- extend the schemes of work and curriculum plans into a more detailed centralised system
- put padding around the supporting pillars in the hall
- organise the library to reinforce pupils' library skills.

School details

Name of school	The Academy School		
DfES number	202/6396		
Unique reference number	131291		
Type of school	Preparatory day school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	April 1997		
Age range of pupils	6-13		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 49	Girls: 22	Total: 71
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,750		
Address of school	The Academy School 2 Pilgrims Place Rosslyn Hill Hampstead London NW3 1NG		
Telephone number	0207435 6621		
Email address	academyschool@hotmail.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Garth Evans		
Proprietor	Ms Chloe Sandars and Mr Garth Evans		
Reporting inspector	Mrs Steffi Penny HMI		
Dates of inspection	23-24 January 2007		