

Hamd House Preparatory School

Independent School

Inspection report

DfES registration number	330 6097
Unique reference number	131687
Inspection number	301531
Inspection dates	13–14 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Dr Nasim Butt

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).

Inspection of funded nursery education was carried out under Schedule 26 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection of the school 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

Hamd House Preparatory School was established in 1998 and caters for pupils aged 3 to 11 years. It is situated in a refurbished, Victorian church in the Small Heath area of Birmingham. Funded nursery education is provided for children under five and over three years and is registered with Ofsted's Children's Directorate. This provision was inspected separately and is reported on at the end of this report. The school has three nursery annexes in Sparkhill, Small Heath and Saltley. Though the school has an Islamic ethos, it is open to children of all faiths and aims to successfully integrate its pupils into British society.

Evaluation of the school

Hamd House Preparatory School provides a good quality education for its pupils and is effective in promoting their spiritual and moral development. The teaching, pupils' learning and their progress are good overall, and the emphasis on literacy and numeracy has resulted in consistently good outcomes in these core curriculum areas. The provision of a caring and supportive environment ensures that pupils' personal development is good. The school is well led and managed, and meets the vast majority of regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

In Hamd House there is a strong emphasis on the linguistic and mathematical areas of learning. This has resulted in pupils achieving high standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are also articulate and confident readers for their age. Less time is allocated for physical education and the aesthetic areas of learning, making pupils' educational experience less enriched than it might be. The emphasis on the core curriculum and Islamic/Quranic Studies stems from the founding philosophy of the school to give pupils a strong grounding in literacy and numeracy in order to make future learning more accessible. This approach is supported by the vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire.

Published schemes of work provide appropriate information about what is to be taught and learned, what resources will be used, and what opportunities will be taken for assessing pupils' learning and progress. Information and communication technology (ICT) is beginning to be used to support teaching and to aid pupils'

progress in subjects. Activities for personal, social and health education are integrated effectively into Islamic Studies and themes for whole school assembly. They are a strong aspect of the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception) classes that contribute much to pupils' personal development. The activities for these classes are soundly based on curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage although the nursery and reception classes do not create sufficient opportunities for children to initiate activities for themselves. At Key Stage 2 (Years 3 to 6), pupils are taught by subject specialists and it is the pupils who move around from class to class. Standards of attainment show that pupils benefit from the expertise that subject specialists bring to the curriculum.

Teaching is mostly good and ensures that pupils make good progress to reach high standards by the time they leave the school. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and pupils in Years 3 to 6 benefit from teaching by subject specialists in English, mathematics, science, Arabic and Islamic Studies. In some lessons observed, teachers used engaging strategies and humour to motivate pupils and sustain their concentration. Pupils responded well, generating a purposeful learning atmosphere that resulted in pupils making good progress during the lesson. However, sometimes there is an over-reliance by teachers on worksheets rather than engaging the pupils with the topic in an interactive way to consolidate their understanding and develop further their thinking and questioning skills. Good teaching of phonics and word-building strategies in the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception) is helping to produce confident readers and writers. Classrooms are pleasant, colourful environments underpinned by warm relationships between teachers and pupils. High expectations of behaviour, underpinned by Islamic values, are set and consistently met. Teachers know their pupils well and, in most cases, use support staff effectively to make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning.

Pupils make good progress during their time in school and achieve well by the time they leave the school. Scores in all areas of learning at the end of the Foundation Stage are consistently above the national expectations. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 are also consistently above the national average in English, mathematics and science. The school tracks pupils' levels of achievement in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science at the end of each term, and sets targets for the end of the academic year. However, this rigour in assessment procedures and tracking of pupils' progress is not extended to other areas of the curriculum. Here, percentages and grades only are used and assessment is not linked to national curriculum levels recording what pupils know, understand and can do. All statutory requirements for assessment and record keeping are met in the reception class. Although staff make observations of pupils regularly and record their learning they miss opportunities to capture key moments in their learning by, for example, building up a portfolio of evidence to support their observations.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Through the teaching and practices of Islam, the school 'aims to develop in pupils a love for Allah and confidence in their identity as Muslims'. Hence, the school places a high priority on pupils' spiritual and moral, as well as personal, development. Provision for spiritual, moral and social development is good, and cultural development is satisfactory. Throughout the school pupils' behaviour is very good; pupils welcomed inspectors warmly. Through its emphasis on developing an Islamic identity, the school is successful in developing confidence and self-esteem in its pupils. Moreover, it successfully promotes pupils' respect for themselves, parents, elders and the wider community. Pupils fulfil responsibly the roles they are given, for example as class monitors. Teachers provide good role models for Islamic life and this has a positive impact on pupils' moral development. Pupils have a clear understanding of their Islamic identity, which is reinforced by the midday congregational prayer and the Islamic ethos which permeates the school. Pupils learned to widen their understanding of the needs of others through a very successful fundraising project for the victims of the earthquake last year in Pakistan. Although the views of pupils are sought through the School Council there are too few opportunities for pupils to mix with their peers in the local school or through links with the wider community.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Overall, procedures for ensuring pupils welfare, health and safety are good. Risk assessments are carried out on all parts of the building, activities, events and visits. First aid cover is good and all accidents are recorded thoroughly. All staff have had basic training in child protection and the proprietor, as the designated adult with responsibility for safeguarding pupils, has had further refresher training for this important role.

Staff show a strong and genuine commitment to pupils' welfare. The policy for managing behaviour is rooted in the principle of rewarding good behaviour and it has a very positive impact. Staff supervise pupils well. Pupils feel safe, and say that there is someone to whom they can turn if they feel worried. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and are marked by caring concern. The school is successful in its aim of encouraging respect for the individual as well as meeting pupils' emotional and social needs.

Pupils have a good level of awareness of how to stay healthy from their work in Islamic Studies and science. Though healthy eating is encouraged at snack times pupils get fewer opportunities for regular exercise through physical education because of the strong focus in the curriculum on teaching academic subjects. One of the three nursery annexes currently does not have arrangements for outdoor play. However, this annexe is moving shortly into new more spacious premises where this issue is expected to be resolved.

The school meets almost all the requirements for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils. All policies are in place, although they are not dated or signed and therefore it is difficult to see how old they are and when they will require a review. The admission register is not up-to-date. Most attendance registers are maintained correctly but two have omissions and/or anomalies. There is a three-year plan under the Disability and Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002, but it is not sufficiently detailed to meet the requirements.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All staff have been checked with the Criminal Records Bureau to ensure their suitability to work with children. The school maintains a complete single central record and follows thorough recruitment procedures to undertake a range of checks on staff before their appointment is confirmed.

School's premises and accommodation

Premises and accommodation are of a satisfactory standard. The classrooms are compact but well organised to maximise the available space. The rooms are well-resourced enhancing learning opportunities for the pupils. The hall (a former church hall) used for assembly, congregational prayer and ICT lessons, together with an adjoining library, enhance the provision. Though a little cramped, there is a designated facility for pupils who may be ill during the day. Interesting displays of pupils' work reinforce high expectations and celebrate their efforts.

The school has met all the regulations for premises and accommodation, and in many places has worked hard to improve the quality of these premises. Nevertheless, some aspects that could be improved: uneven paving slabs in the girls' playground present a hazard; both outdoor play areas are cramped; the exterior of the Reception class windows are rotting.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school has good procedures for communicating with parents and others. The handbook for parents provides appropriate and useful information, including information about the curriculum and the school's ethos. Satisfactory reports are sent to parents annually and parent evenings are held twice yearly to inform them about their child's attainment and progress. All parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that their children are happy in school and they are comfortable in approaching the school to resolve any issues. One parent reported that "my children have improved a great deal by attending this school".

Procedures for handling complaints

The complaints procedures are clearly set out and fully meet the regulations.

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:

- maintain an admission and attendance register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

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

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:

- broaden the curriculum to ensure the aesthetic dimension is also provided and pupils' experiences further enriched as a result
- improve the rigour with which pupils' progress is tracked in the non-core subjects so that the quality matches that seen in mathematics, English and science
- further improve the quality of assessment in the Foundation Stage through the use of portfolios of evidence highlighting pupils' achievements.

Inspection of funded nursery education

Effectiveness of the funded nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage and follow detailed activity plans demonstrating a clear understanding of what children are expected to learn. Activities are presented at a level which enables all children to participate and staff challenge more able children to encourage them to progress further. However, there are few opportunities for

children to become independent in selecting their own activities due to the structure of the routine and all activities being predominantly staff directed.

Children are making good progress in all areas of their development with very good progress being made in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. Staff assess aspects of children's development and learning. However, these observations are insufficiently linked to children's records to make the assessments objective and informative to assist with future planning for children's learning.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Staff place strong emphasis on helping children consider and respect others, consequently children behave well. During Arabic and Islamic studies children develop an awareness of their culture and have opportunities to read from the Quran and learn Arabic. Children are also able to learn about other cultures through activities linked to planned topics.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. The setting is committed to working with parents. Annual workshops are organised to support parents in helping their children to read and write and parents receive information about the provision for nursery education in a detailed prospectus and through regular discussions.

The leadership and management is good. The management has a clear vision for future practice and regularly observes teaching to identify strengths and weaknesses. Staff take advantage of the training opportunities offered in order to update their skills and knowledge. Staff also value the advice and support they receive from other professionals, this ensures that the quality of education is improved as staff remain open and responsive to new ways of working. The needs of all children are being met.

Recommendations or actions to improve the funded nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of the nursery education the registered person should take account of the following recommendations:

- ensure that assessments are informative and objective to assist in planning for children's future learning needs
- provide further opportunities for children to develop their independence in selecting their own activities.

School details

Name of school	Hamd House Preparatory School		
DfES number	330/6097		
Unique reference number	131687		
Unique reference number (funded nursery education)	EY260561		
Type of school	Independent school		
Status	Preparatory		
Date school opened	1998		
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 98	Girls: 98	Total: 196
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
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
Number of children receiving funded nursery education	Boys: 180	Girls: 197	Total: 377
Annual fees (day pupils)	£100 - £1785		
Address of school	11-27 St Oswald's Road Small Heath Birmingham West Midlands B10 9RB		
Telephone number	0121 7727608		
Fax number	0121 7727517		
Email address	hamdhouseschool@yahoo.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr S Ali		
Proprietor	Mr Israr Khan		
Reporting inspector	Dr Nasim Butt		
Childcare inspector	Angela Dyer		
Dates of inspection	13–14 June 2007		