

# Lewes New School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	845/6047
Unique Reference Number	132729
Inspection number	301557
Inspection dates	5-6 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Linda Kelsey 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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Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE  
T 08456 404040  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



## 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 Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the school

Lewes New School is a non profit making charitable trust school providing independent co-education for pupils aged 3-11 years. It was founded in 2000 by a group of parents and teachers with the support of the charity 'Human Scale Education'. There are currently 52 full-time pupils and 11 part-time children under the age of 5. The school is situated in Lewes, Sussex.

The school aims to provide a small learning community where the needs of the individual can be more fully understood and met. Its curriculum is designed to meet the needs of individual pupils and promote a rigorous and effective process of teaching and learning that is shaped by children's ideas as much as the teachers'.

The school was registered as an independent school in 2002. This is the first published report following an Ofsted inspection.

## Evaluation of the school

Lewes New School provides a satisfactory quality of education and pupils are well behaved, articulate and confident individuals. They make satisfactory progress in their studies because the curriculum, teaching and assessment are satisfactory. The school's provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils is good and its provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good. Attendance at the school is well below average and although the school has taken steps to improve this, not all parents are responding to these efforts. The school has several matters to address to meet the regulatory requirements fully.

### Quality of education

The quality of education is satisfactory. The Foundation Stage provision is good and children have good access to a wide range of activities which are delivered in a thoughtful and exciting way. Role play is used well to extend children's thinking and develop their understanding and knowledge of the world. A good example of this was the imaginary school with the 'shape shop', which encouraged children to order shapes by describing their main features to each other over the telephone.

The curriculum is satisfactory. Across the school long term curriculum plans are in place. Pupils develop their basic skills through working on themed activities and

project work, which are derived from their own discussions with their teacher. These themes link together so that pupils acquire an understanding of the world around them. They engage in physical activity through dance and physical education (PE). All pupils swim in the summer term. They enjoy the local environment and visit places of interest as well as having visitors to the school. All these activities promote good discussions and project work.

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory. Strengths in teaching include the long term curriculum planning which ensures coverage of subjects and the good management of individual pupils in the class. Class time is managed well and teaching methods ensure that pupils are well behaved, stay on task and are engaged in the learning. Teachers use their knowledge well to plan innovative projects, drawn from the pupils' own ideas. They make learning, as much as possible, real, relevant and fun. However, there are weaknesses in the short term and daily planning of lessons. At times the pace of learning is too slow and tasks are not always completed in good time.

Teachers are not assessing pupils' academic achievements well enough and concentrate their observations on the pupils' personal development and whether the curriculum is covered. The school uses its own holistic assessment framework. This framework includes literacy and numeracy diaries and a range of other ways of recording pupils' progress. However, this system of pupil assessment does not inform teachers enough about pupils' achievement against agreed standards and as a result, teachers are unclear how well pupils are doing against national norms.

Pupils' academic progress is satisfactory overall. Pupils' language and literacy work is good and some have written extensive stories and thoughtful poems. In all classes there is a lack of urgency or drive to get work done quickly or to a high standard if pupils chose not to. Some work, particularly the children's art, mathematics and science is poor; it lacks depth of enquiry, research and knowledge. Information and communication technology skills are not developed well, partly because the school does not have enough good computers and partly because teachers do not have enough knowledge to develop skills outside word processing. The school is not preparing pupils well for future academic studies in mathematics, science and technology.

## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' personal development and well-being are also good. They are articulate and confident and well prepared for their next school. They are polite, mature and confident young people who take pride in themselves and respect and value the opinions of others. Relationships across school are strong and behaviour is good. Lunch and break times are good social occasions to chat and play together in a calm and harmonious setting where teachers and adults clearly enjoy the company of the pupils they teach.

Spiritual development is good and pupils are very sensitive to the feelings of others. They celebrate occasions such as birthdays, friendships, assemblies, music and song, 'circle' and 'quiet' time. They study and learn about religious celebrations such as Christmas, Eid, and Diwali, and know moral stories such as 'the Mustard Seed' and the life of Buddha and Christ. Opportunities for discussion and reflection, which are central to the schools' ethos, help to develop pupils' spirituality effectively.

Cultural development is good. Pupils learn to value their own culture and those of others. They have undertaken studies of India and Zambian music and have links with a school in Thailand. They have had a visit from a Nigerian father who told stories about other cultures. The school provides good understanding of moral principles that allow pupils to tell right from wrong. Class rules are agreed by the pupils who fully understand the implications. Pupils learn about the local communities through their topic on the locality when they interview residents, a councillor and architect to discuss future improvements.

While pupils say they enjoy their time at school, and the time with their friends, not all attend school well enough to assure their academic progress. A number of pupils take considerable time off school because they are engaged in other activities in school hours such as drama productions, music lessons, extended holiday trips and outings with parents. It is not always possible for teachers to ensure that pupils catch up with the work they have missed without affecting the progress made by all the children in the class.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for welfare, health and safety of the pupils is good. Parents are very appreciative and as one parent remarked, this is 'a nurturing, caring school'. Pupils understand how to keep healthy and fit. Many bring their scooter to school and use these at break times in the playground. Three times a week all staff and pupils enjoy a vegetarian lunch cooked on the premises. Policies have been carefully thought out and effectively implemented. They include: anti-bullying, health and safety of pupils in class, lessons such as cooking and using a glue gun during woodwork lessons. Risk assessments for visits outside the school are robust.

Fire Precaution regulations are met and risks recently checked. The school completes fire drills each term. The behaviour policy is implemented effectively and as a result pupils' behaviour is good in classes and around the school. There is appropriate provision made for first-aid and two members of staff are trained to administer it. There are appropriately stocked first aid boxes easily available. Child protection policies are in place and the headteacher is the designated person. However, no one has recent, relevant up-to-date training. The supervision of pupils is good both in classes and around the school.

The school keeps admission and attendance registers in accordance with regulations, and the requirements for Disability and Discrimination are met.

### Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Appropriate procedures are in place to ensure that all members of staff employed since the arrival of the headteacher are fully checked for their suitability to work with pupils. The school has a single central record of all staff checks. However, in the case of staff employed prior to the appointment of the headteacher, neither references nor medical checks have been followed up.

The school employs volunteers working at the school who are foreign nationals but there are no procedures for establishing their suitability to work with children. The members of the proprietorial body have not been appropriately checked, including their right to work in UK.

### School's premises and accommodation

The school is accommodated in an old local Victorian school building. The premises are in sound condition and classrooms are a good size as well as being light and airy. The overall standard of decoration is good. The school has an on going plan for redecoration and upgrading of the building. There is a hall which can be used for dining, productions and for physical activity such as dance. Outside the headteacher's office and the library there is an uneven surface and ragged material, which is a potential hazard as pupils or staff could trip.

There is enough space outside and pupils are properly supervised. However, the playground does have some uneven surfaces. Pupils are allowed to bring scooters to school, skipping ropes and playtime is active and lively with groups playing well together.

### Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school gives all the required information through its prospectus and other supporting documentation. This wide range of information to parents includes a website, a governors' book, weekly newsletters and a daily notice board to keep parents informed about outings, events and activities. Parents are able to approach the school about any concerns and they make good use of a meeting room within the school. Parents' evenings are held each term and at the end of the school year a written report on their child's development is given out. Parents have good opportunities to discuss their children's progress.

The school has a wide range of policies, procedures and information available for parents on request and these are kept in the governors' book. Parents express a high degree of satisfaction with their children's education. They are overwhelmingly

supportive of the school's activities and say that, 'The school is very approachable, has excellent partnership with parents and is receptive to new ideas'.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The procedures for dealing with complaints are fully compliant with 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 the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- ensure there is a system for accurately judging how well each individual pupil acquires knowledge and skills. (paragraph 1 (3) (g))

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

- ensure that all staff receive relevant up-to-date training in child protection (paragraph 3 (2) (b)).

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

- ensure that the list and qualifications, including appropriate details of medical checks are all up to date for all staff currently at the school. (Paragraph 4 (2) (a))
- ensure that appropriate checks are made of any person working in the school (including volunteers) who has lived outside the UK (paragraph 4(2)(c))
- ensure that the register shows that checks have been made, and certificates obtained of the identity, qualifications, enhanced CRB checks and the right to work in the UK in relation to each person named as a member of staff and proprietor and that these checks are dated and completed. (paragraph 4C (6 and 7)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- improve outside areas so that there is less risk of pupils falling over and hurting themselves (paragraph 5 (t)).

## 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:

- improve attendance of all pupils
- develop further the planning for day to day work programmes and activities so that all pupils are suitably challenged, the pace of lessons improves and pupils make better progress during their time at the school
- take steps to devise rigorous assessment procedures so that teachers have a clearer idea of how well each individual pupil is doing at school and can plan accordingly for their needs.



## School details

Name of school	Lewes New School		
DCSF number	845/6047		
Unique reference number	132729		
Type of school	Primary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	2000		
Age range of pupils	3-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 25	Girls: 27	Total: 52
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 11	Total: 11
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 570-5,350		
Address of school	Talbot Terrace		
	Lewes		
	East Sussex		
	BN7 2DS		
Telephone number	01273477 074		
Fax number	01273483 054		
Email address	lizzie.overton@lewesnewschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Lizzie Overton		
Proprietor	Lewes New School		
Reporting inspector	Linda Kelsey HMI		
Dates of inspection	5-6 December 2007		