

Springmead School

Independent School

Inspection report

DfES Registration Number	933/6204
Unique Reference Number	134116
Inspection number	301611
Inspection dates	13-14 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Thomas Smith 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

Springmead School is a mixed independent nursery and preparatory school for 106 pupils aged 2 to 11 years. The school provides 40 funded nursery places. It was opened by the current proprietors in April 2002 and registered by the Department for Education and Skills in 2003. The school aims to provide a high quality education for its pupils in a safe environment that is stimulating, rewarding and fun and where pupils can achieve their personal potential and gain a life long love of learning.

Evaluation of the school

Springmead School provides its pupils with an outstanding quality of education and care. The curriculum and teaching is outstanding and this enables pupils to become confident and enquiring learners. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. The school fully achieves its aim to nurture the talents of each pupil. All regulatory requirements are met and staff implement all procedures effectively. Parents are effusive in their praise and appreciation of what the school undertakes for their children.

Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding and well matched to the needs of all pupils. The Foundation Stage curriculum covers all the required areas of learning. Older pupils undertake study of all the required subjects, including French, and these are further enhanced through a rich provision of alternative activities and other provision for their personal development.

The quality of the Foundation Stage curriculum is outstanding. Learning is nurtured through challenging activities that do not constrain the children's sense of fun. The curriculum is very effectively planned and provides a wide range of relevant and interesting opportunities for learning that stimulate children's interests and imagination. Children's speaking and listening, personal and independence skills are very well developed. By the end of the Reception Year children have achieved almost all the Early Learning Goals and many exceed this expectation in all six areas of learning. This indicates good progress made by all children and very good progress by those of higher ability; this also reflects the skilful teaching of the staff. Staff show an outstanding awareness of how young children learn.

Relationships within this age group are outstanding. All adults provide good role models and treat children with courtesy and respect. In lessons, children were seen using their knowledge and awareness of how to stay healthy and fit. Safety of children is considered paramount by the staff. Children's awareness of being safe in and around the school is securely developed.

The broader school curriculum is based on the requirements of the National Curriculum. This is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Planning of this curriculum is also meticulous and teachers are assiduous in recording the outcomes to all learning. The curriculum is individualised for pupils of all abilities and this ensures progression in their learning. Pupils are provided with individual targets in both literacy and numeracy and these, in conjunction with opportunities for their personal development, enable many to make exceptional progress. Pupils of all abilities make good progress, as evidenced by the Performance Indicators for Primary Schools. Pupils are prepared very well for the next stage in their learning.

The quality of teaching is outstanding and because of this all pupils make at least good progress. Meticulous planning of the curriculum and of lessons ensures that each session is a period of intense learning for all pupils. Staff have very good subject expertise and use their infectious enthusiasm and commitment to benefit all pupils. Pupils pick up on this enthusiasm and use it to develop their eagerness for learning. In lessons they query anything they do not understand and show themselves to be effective and confident learners. Improvement in a minority of lessons is possible, where these do not include a clear statement of the intended learning and where opportunities to re-focus these are missed during the course of the session. The balance is often restored through use of outstanding plenary phases that enable pupils to demonstrate what they have understood and give teachers the opportunity to assess the effectiveness of their teaching.

Teachers use a wide range of resources and effective strategies to ensure that all pupils can access learning at their appropriate level. Pupils work in pairs and groups but, when required, they also work as individuals and so develop independence in learning. Pupils with individual learning needs receive targeted assistance from teachers and support staff with the appropriate expertise. Older pupils in particular, show a mature approach to their learning.

The positive rapport that teachers have with their pupils enables them to extend learning through a series of challenging tasks and methods. This rapport is derived from the knowledge that teachers have of each pupil's attainment. Where a pupil may have an individual learning need, this is catered for by careful planning and consideration of such needs. Over 25 per cent of pupils have such a need.

Assessment of pupils work is good and used consistently to plan improvement. Using the wide range of data that it collects the school has a clear understanding about the continuous performance of its pupils. The outcomes to this information are provided routinely to parents through regular consultation as well as informative reports. Staff

mark pupils' work carefully and the best practice comments on ways in which the pupils may improve. Generally the remarks are encouraging and give confidence to pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding. However, in a few instances the comments could be more rigorous and informative to the pupil. Older pupils, particularly, are not required to undertake self-assessment, although critical comment of the work of others was a common feature in all lessons.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school provides a wealth of excellent opportunities for pupils to develop their characters and understanding of the world around them. Pupils enjoy coming to the school and take part in all its activities with significant enthusiasm. Their behaviour is outstanding. Attendance figures indicate no unauthorised absences and the views of parents confirm that their children like the school. Pupils are unfailingly courteous and show significant confidence when talking to adults. Older pupils are particularly self-confident.

Pupils are given many opportunities to take responsibility, for example, through membership of the school council, as class monitors or serving others at the daily lunch table. These responsibilities are given commensurate to the maturity of the pupil.

Relationships and the social development of pupils are outstanding. There is mutual respect between staff and pupils. Pupils know they are valued and any contributions they make are respected and developed.

Pupils have a very clear understanding of the concept of community. This is nurtured throughout the school. Despite being in the area for a short time, the school has involved itself in village life, through its fund raising and other ventures for local and international charities. There is an active school council; records are kept of discussions which ensure that its suggestions are noted.

Pupils' appreciation of their own culture and that of others is strongly developed. Representatives of other faiths are invited to address the pupils and give presentations about their beliefs and traditions.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is outstanding. Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in making the school a safe place in which to work. School management ensures that staff undertake training in order to guarantee their knowledge of current requirements. All the required policies are in place and implemented effectively. The proprietors ensure these are fully put into practice and regularly monitor the outcomes. However, some of this monitoring

could be more rigorously evaluated. Pupils say they feel safe at the school and that there is no one they fear. The many purposeful visits away from the school are all thoroughly risk assessed prior to them taking place.

The school has undertaken appropriate fire risk assessments and has rigorous procedures in place to deal with any such emergency. First aid procedures are clear and implemented well.

Pupils are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles. Physical education lessons and other informal vigorous activities represent a large portion of each day. During the course of the year pupils can choose from a selection of more than 30 different activities that the school offers as extra-curricular clubs. At morning break times pupils are provided with fresh fruit and a selection of healthy drinks. School lunches, cooked on the premises, are all nutritionally balanced.

The school has a written access plan in place that meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (2002).

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school undertakes all the required checks prior to the confirmation of appointment of any staff.

School's premises and accommodation

The school is situated in an old building, parts of which date from the sixteenth century. Prior to its opening in 2002 the building was substantially redeveloped and it now provides a stimulating environment for learning. Classrooms for the youngest pupils are complemented by adjacent external areas which extend their learning through play. Pupils benefit from a well stocked library and an information and communication technology suite. Displays of pupils' work throughout the school enhance the environment and provide vibrancy to the working atmosphere. Although the school is on four floors the good behaviour of pupils and close supervision by staff ensure that movement around the school is an orderly process; this is further enhanced through the operation of a one-way system that uses different stairways.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Questionnaires from parents indicate unanimous support for the school and show they were wholly satisfied with the information they receive. One parent noted that 'I wish he could stay for the rest of his school life'. The school uses many opportunities to inform parents about its work. These range from an excellent web site to newsletters, reports and informal meetings. All requirements are met.

Procedures for handling complaints

The procedures for the handling of any complaint are clear and easily understood. No formal complaints have been received within the last year.

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:

- further improve the effectiveness of some lessons by stating more clearly the intended learning and enable pupils to become more involved in processes of self-assessment
- improve feedback to pupils' by offering constructive comments on how they might improve their work
- evaluate the implementation of school policies, in order to raise the quality of provision even further.

School details

Name of school	Springmead School		
DfES number	933/6204		
Unique reference number	134116		
Unique reference number (funded nursery education)	EY221147		
Type of school	Nursery, Pre-prep and Preparatory		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	April 2002		
Age range of pupils	2-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 39	Girls: 31	Total: 70
Number of children receiving day care	Boys: 1	Girls: 3	Total: 4
Number of children receiving funded nursery education	Boys: 17	Girls: 15	Total: 32
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 5604		
Address of school	Castle Corner Beckington Somerset BA11 6TA		
Telephone number	01373 831555		
Fax number	01373 831560		
Email address	info@springmead.com		
Co-Principals	Stephen & Madeleine Taylor		
Proprietors	Stephen & Madeleine Taylor; Jacqueline Beardsley		
Reporting inspector	Thomas Smith AI		
Dates of inspection	13-14 June 2007		