

The Mount School

Independent School

Inspection report

DfES Registration Number	382/6006
Unique Reference Number	107787
Inspection number	301631
Inspection dates	6-7 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Elisabeth Linley 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

The Mount School was founded in 1950 and moved to its present site in Huddersfield in 1961. The school is situated in a building that was once a private home and is spread over three floors. There is an additional demountable classroom block and a building housing the school hall and kitchen within the grounds. Outside there are two hard surfaced yards, an adventure playground area and grassed areas.

The Mount school is a non-selective independent day school for girls and boys aged 3 -11 years. Before and after school care is provided for its pupils and funded nursery education is in place for children over three and under five years of age. This provision is registered with Ofsted's Early Years Directorate and was last inspected by a childcare inspector in 2005. The issues raised at that time have been addressed. The school's motto 'Live to Learn, Learn to Live' is central to the school's work.

Evaluation of the school

The Mount School provides a good quality of education for its pupils. The majority of parents are positive about the school and what it provides for their children.

The school is successful in meeting its aims 'to provide a welcoming, stimulating and caring environment in a co-educational setting for children aged 3 – 11 years, in which they can flourish and develop'.

Quality of education

The Mount School provides a good curriculum. Planning takes account of the National Curriculum and strong emphasis is placed on English, mathematics and science. The curriculum ensures that pupils achieve well by making learning fun. Practical activities are planned where appropriate to ensure that pupils are active learners. A particular example of where this is successful is in the Early Years classes when during the inspection, high quality outdoor provision engaged children very well in many meaningful activities.

Pupils throughout school enjoy a broad and balanced curriculum and benefit from the expertise of specialist teachers in French, music and art. As pupils get older and move into upper school, appropriate attention is given to preparing them for

examinations. As a result, the vast majority of pupils in Year 6 transfer to the school of their choice many of which are selective independent secondary schools. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of extra curricular activities. Pupils say how much they enjoy these opportunities. Sporting activities are a firm favourite and pupils enjoy swimming and tennis plus having the chance to compete against other schools in football and netball matches. Other opportunities include excursions to places of interest and pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 take part in a residential visit. Pupils study the piano and singing and many have been successful in music examinations and have enjoyed taking part in music competitions.

The quality of teaching is good overall. Most teachers ask pertinent questions to challenge pupils in their thinking. In a Year 1 literacy lesson, for example, pupils took on the role of 'harbour master' and 'witness' with ease and confidence as they sought to aid the discovery of 'Pirate Jack'. The teacher's effective questioning prompted pupils to think carefully about whether their solutions to problems were correct given when the pirates in question lived.

Teachers' planning outlines the content to be covered in lessons and how time is to be used and so lessons have a good pace. Teachers know their pupils well and because there are small groups in most classes teachers respond effectively to their immediate needs. Pupils who require extra help are well supported, for example, by additional support staff in the lower school, and this helps them to achieve well. There is, however, some inconsistency in how teachers plan to meet the abilities of all pupils, for example, some pupils have targets to achieve and others do not.

Observational assessments of children in lower kindergarten and kindergarten are thorough and are used well to plan high quality activities. The school records pupils' progress through teacher assessments of their attainment against National Curriculum levels. Other standardised tests are carried out each year together with reading and spelling tests. These provide clear evidence of the high standards reached by many pupils.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school is successful in promoting confidence and raising pupils' self-esteem. Relationships are positive and pupils are polite, caring and articulate. An example of this was seen during the inspection when Year 6 pupils listened attentively to younger children read. They were highly motivated to aid their younger friends and showed real care in the attention they gave them. Behaviour in and around the school is good. Occasionally pupils do not concentrate as well as they might and sometimes lose interest in the lesson if it is not planned as well as it should have been. Regular assemblies reinforce the caring ethos of the school. Every week, pupils' work is celebrated and pupils enjoy sharing each others' achievements. Pupils receive visitors with courtesy; two Year 6 pupils did a particularly good job of showing inspectors around the school at the beginning of the inspection. Pupils are

involved in their local community. Last year, pupils in the current Year 5 applied and were successful in securing council funding to improve the grassed area outside their school. They still talk proudly of their achievement. Pupils have an appreciation of other faiths through the provision for Religious Education. A positive link has been established with a local Parish Church and parents have worked with the school to ensure that pupils have a good understanding of the faiths of their friends. Although a formal structure is not in place to gather pupils' views, the debating society has provided a vehicle for this to happen. However, at the current time the club is not in operation owing to a temporary staff absence.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school's procedures for ensuring the welfare, health and safety of its pupils are satisfactory overall and in some respects good. Detailed policies are in place to promote the safety and well-being of pupils. Risk assessments are thorough and cover all aspects of staff and pupil activity. The child protection policy meets current requirements and the training of the responsible person and of the whole staff is up to date. The school makes necessary checks on the suitability of all who work with the pupils but the proprietors and senior staff have yet to undertake training in safe recruitment. Pupils generally behave in a sensible and safe way around the school; however, current levels of supervision at break and lunchtimes are inadequate for the youngest children.

Pastoral care and procedures for promoting pupils' personal development are good. Clear policies promote good behaviour and ensure that pupils learn in a calm, positive atmosphere. Pupils confirm that they feel secure in school and that they are free from bullying or racism. Nevertheless, procedures to record sanctions imposed for incidents of serious misbehaviour are not in place. The school takes seriously its duty with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002. There are currently no pupils with mobility difficulties or disabilities, but the school has plans to upgrade access and facilities for such pupils during the next school year.

Healthy living is an integral part of school life. Pupils know the importance of healthy eating and the taking of exercise. They are also safety conscious and use equipment carefully.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The majority of required checks are carried out prior to the appointment of staff but more vigilance is needed in relation to checking qualifications and medical fitness. Everyone working with the children has been subject to a check with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) before being permanently employed.

School's premises and accommodation

The accommodation is adequate. Site security is satisfactory and there are suitable arrangements for the emergency evacuation of all parts of the building. Classroom space is somewhat cramped for the number of pupils but the school is forward looking in its plans to rotate its use of rooms to better accommodate groups of differing sizes. Assemblies, dance, drama and music lessons are held in the hall and there is a library with a good stock of reading books and a dedicated computer suite. Important areas, such as stairs, are in good condition and other parts of the school are in a good state of maintenance. Outside play areas with hard and grass surfaces are well provided with play equipment and games. The premises have been used as a school for many years and there is a rolling programme for maintenance and refurbishment, which will soon result in the upgrading of toilet facilities for pupils, staff and the disabled. However, there are currently no facilities for the care of pupils who become ill.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Regular newsletters are informative and provide information about pupils' achievements such as in netball matches and swimming galas and they also let parents know about forthcoming events. Parents receive twice annual reports about the progress and attainment of their children. The school website is also well presented and is kept up to date. Although, the quality of information to parents is good, parents report through questionnaires to Ofsted that they do not always feel able to approach school to share their concerns or new ideas.

Procedures for handling complaints

The schools' complaints policy satisfies requirements and is made available to parents. However, the school does not report to parents on the number of formal complaints received during the preceding year.

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:

- undertake appropriate training and implement recruitment procedures in line with DfES guidance on Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education (2007) (paragraph 3(2)(b));

- improve the ratio of supervisory staff to pupils at break and lunchtimes 3(7);
- ensure that the school's actions in respect of all incidents of serious misbehaviour, bullying or racism are properly recorded 3(8).

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

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff, ensure that appropriate checks have been made to confirm their qualifications and medical fitness 4(c).

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

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 5(l).

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

- provide particulars of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding year 6 (2) (j).

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 lesson planning to meet the needs of all pupils effectively so that they are consistently challenged to do their best;
- ensure pupils know their targets and teachers' marking helps them to improve as they work towards achieving them.

School details

Name of school	The Mount School		
DfES number	382/6006		
Unique reference number	107787		
Type of school	I		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1950		
Age range of pupils	4-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 73	Girls: 70	Total: 143
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys:	Girls:	Total:
Number of boarders	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
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4740		
Annual fees (boarders)	n/a		
Address of school	3 Binham Road Edgerton Huddersfield West Yorkshire HD2 2AP		
Telephone number	01484426432		
Fax number	01484426432		
Email address	info@themount.org.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs J Goodchild		
Proprietor	Mr N M Smith, Mr P R Gidley, Mrs V M Gidley		
Reporting inspector	Elisabeth Linley HMI		
Dates of inspection	6-7 June 2007		