

Wickham Court School

Independent School

Inspection report

DfES Registration Number	305/6079
Unique Reference Number	134175
Inspection number	301645
Inspection dates	13 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Hartland 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

Wickham Court school is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged between two and a half and twelve years of age. It is located in the south east region of outer London between Croydon and Bromley. The school opened in 2002 and has plans to extend its provision further into the secondary sector. There are currently 121 pupils on roll. The school aims to provide a happy family atmosphere which helps all children to thrive. It recognises *'that education is very much a partnership between pupil, the school and family.'* The school seeks *'to provide an environment for learning that is safe and secure, one that is aesthetically enriching and one that enables all children to reach their potential.'* The school is part of the Schiller International University group, an independent educational organisation which owns schools and colleges in Europe and the USA.

Evaluation of the school

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It is particularly successful in promoting the pupils' personal development and in enhancing their skills in English and mathematics. The teaching enables the pupils to make satisfactory progress overall although good progress in English and mathematics. The staff are caring, most pupils are happy at the school and feel safe in the family atmosphere which it creates. The majority of parents are very positive about the school. However, the school falls short in meeting a significant number of the regulations, especially in relation to the policies required to promote the pupils' welfare, health and safety and in providing information for parents and prospective parents.

Quality of education

The curriculum is broad and balanced and is satisfactory overall. There is good provision for the Foundation Stage. The curriculum plans draw heavily, although not exclusively, on the national curriculum, supplementing and adapting it as the school sees fit. The prime focus is on developing basic skills in English and mathematics, where there is a strong provision with a good range of resources. The pupils also study science, history, geography, music, art and craft, physical education, French and religious education (RE). Although there is no planned programme, the pupils have opportunities to develop their skills in information and communication technology (ICT). Work in RE is not well planned and in the upper part of the school it lacks substance and challenge.

The pupils are divided into year groups with each class having less than twenty pupils. Lessons are mainly taught by class teachers with some subject specialist teaching, for example in drama and in French. Pupils develop their literacy skills across some subjects and there are specific strengths in speaking and listening, for example in drama. There are missed opportunities for establishing further cross-curricular links for promoting the use of numeracy, ICT and themes in personal, social and health education. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. The school prepares pupils adequately for the next stage of their education.

The curriculum plans are inadequate and provide too little information on what work is to be covered in each term by each year group. The planning does not make it clear how the pupils will progress from one stage to the next, or what strategies will be used to provide appropriate work for the range of abilities in each class. Planning especially makes too little reference to the learning needs of pupils who have been identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities. The schemes of work are undeveloped and inadequate. As a result the teachers' lesson planning is less effective than it could be. The school is aware of the need to improve the curriculum planning and of the need to include plans for the new Year 8 class in September 2007. It has arranged consultancy support to help in the process.

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory overall. Although the teaching is good in most respects, assessment practice has shortcomings. Teachers plan their lessons although the planning is too individualistic as the long-term school plans provide too little guidance for them. The intended lesson outcomes are not always clear enough or shared with the pupils so that they know exactly what they should be learning. Through the use of effective class management skills, the teachers enable the pupils to remain engaged with their learning during lessons. Pupils enjoy lessons and work hard at learning. They are relaxed and comfortable with their teachers with whom they have good relationships. As a result, they are very willing to answer questions and to offer their views. They demonstrate confidence in doing so. The pupils are well-behaved in lessons. The small classes allow teachers to provide good support to individual pupils. Where the teaching is less strong, the work provided is not sufficiently stimulating or challenging. Pupils admit that they find the work easier in some subjects. There is currently no school policy on teaching and learning to bring a consistency of approach and to ensure good classroom practice across the school. The current monitoring of teaching lacks sufficient rigour in evaluating the quality of the teaching.

Some aspects of assessment are undeveloped and unsatisfactory. In some subjects the pupils do not understand how well they are doing. The school has no marking scheme. Marking is generally regular but apart from English, where some excellent marking was seen, too often it provides only ticks with possibly a brief note of praise. Marking too rarely indicates to pupils what they need to do to improve. The pupils make satisfactory progress overall because the curriculum plans and the teaching do not make good provision for the different ages and abilities to enable them to make

consistently good progress across subjects. Pupils gain rewards for good work but there is no whole-school reward system.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social development is good. The pupils demonstrate self-confidence and even the youngest were very willing to come over and talk to an inspector at break-times. They are invariably courteous and most greeted the visiting inspectors with a clear 'Good morning.' They enjoy coming to school and are happy, in part because of the individual attention they are able to receive from the staff.

The pupils are very well-behaved in lessons and around the school. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and get on well with each other. They support the school community well in acting as prefects and class monitors. However, the pupils do not have any significant say in the running of the school and there is no channel, such as a school council, where they have a 'voice.' Their knowledge of the wider community is developed well in lessons such as history and in geography where Year 6 pupils undertook a detailed study of the rainforests. They make a good contribution to the work of a range of charities, for example in providing a wheelchair for a woman in Turkey. They develop some degree of cultural awareness through the visits to local places of interest, such as sites of historical interest. There are examples of good art work on display and the pupils have been involved in musical events. The pupils experienced aspects of the Hindu festival of Diwali for example in dressing up, but there are missed opportunities to develop a wider cultural awareness through the study of different world religions.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Although in practice, the school is satisfactory in providing a safe, caring and a strongly nurturing environment for the pupils, the provision for the pupil's welfare, health and safety is only barely satisfactory overall. There are significant shortcomings in the lack of written policies and the adoption of up-to-date procedures which means that the school does not meet a number of the regulations. The school has failed to keep sufficiently up-to-date with legislation and national guidance which promotes the welfare, health and safety of pupils in schools.

The policies for child protection, for health and safety, for first aid, and to tackle bullying are not up-to-date. Although a minority of the pupils say that there is some bullying in the school, this was not evident to inspectors and was not a concern raised by the vast majority of parents. The first aid boxes are appropriately stocked and accidents are carefully recorded. However there is too little guidance for staff on actions to be taken when a child is injured. The school has made the necessary provision for fire safety. The fire drill book is up-to-date and equipment is regularly checked. The staff know the pupils well, have high expectations of their behaviour

and supervise them well. The school maintains an admission register and attendance registers, but the latter are not kept strictly in accordance with requirements. The school does not meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 with plans to improve access and provision for those with disabilities. A number of pupils were critical of the quality of the food provided for lunch. A small minority of parents want to be able to provide packed lunches for their children and this was also a request from a number of pupils. The pupils have regular opportunities for exercise and good use is made of the school grounds, but pupils would like more sports equipment for use outside during break-times.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

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

School's premises and accommodation

The school premises consist of a highly attractive listed building dating back to the fifteenth century with substantial grounds mainly laid to lawn of which staff and pupils are justly proud. Many parts of the interior of the school reveal the period features of the building. The school has a library and a suite of computers. The washrooms have recently been upgraded. The school buildings and environment are maintained in a generally good condition. The classrooms are carpeted and well-lit and although some are small, they provide sufficient space for the size of classes. Most classrooms have an additional room attached for resources and the pupils' belongings. The classroom furniture is fit for purpose. The school does not have appropriate facilities for pupils who are unwell.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Some information, although too little to meet all the regulations, is to be found in the prospectus for parents. There are too few details about the proprietor of the school. There is no clear statement of the school's aims and ethos and no information is provided for parents about the arrangements for admissions, discipline and exclusions or the provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language or who have special educational needs. It is not made clear to parents that other pieces of information are available on request: those relating to bullying; child protection; health and safety; the promotion of good behaviour; sanctions; particulars of academic performance; the complaints procedure and the number of complaints during the preceding school year; and the staff employed at the school, along with their qualifications. The annual reports to parents provide a satisfactory amount of information.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a brief written complaints policy which sets out the procedures the school will follow in the management of any complaint. However, it contains too little information about some of the specific elements and processes required by the regulations. A significant minority of parents claimed that they did not know enough about the complaints procedure.

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:

- set out a curriculum policy, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for each subject and each year group, and implement it effectively (paragraph 1(2))
- put a framework in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and utilise the information from such assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress (paragraph 1(3)(g))
- put in place a framework by which pupil performance can be evaluated by reference to the school's own aims and/or by national norms (paragraph 1(4)).

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

- prepare and implement a written policy to prevent bullying which has regard to the DfES guidance *Bullying: don't suffer in silence* (DfES 0064/2000) (paragraph 3(2)(a))
- prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with DfES guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education* (2007) (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- prepare and implement a written policy relating to the health and safety pupils on activities outside the school which has regard to DfES guidance *Health and safety of pupils on educational visits* (reference HSPV2) (paragraph 3(2)(c))

- produce and implement a satisfactory written policy on first aid (paragraph 3(6))
- keep written records of sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious disciplinary offences (paragraph 3(8))
- ensure the attendance registers are maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 3(9)).

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 (paragraph 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, where the proprietor is an individual, his full name, address for correspondence during both term time and holidays and a telephone number or numbers on which he may be contacted at all times (paragraph 6(2)(b))
- provide a statement of the school's ethos and aims (paragraph 6(2)(d))
- provide parents and prospective parents with particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for admissions, discipline and exclusions (paragraph 6(2)(e))
- provide parents and prospective parents with the particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements and pupils for whom English is an additional language (paragraph 6(2)(f))
- ensure that parents are aware they can request particulars of policies relating to:
 - bullying, child protection, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour and rewards and sanctions (paragraph 6(2)(h))
 - academic performance (paragraph 6(2)(i))
 - the complaints procedures and the number of complaints during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j))
 - the number of staff employed at the school including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 6(2)(k)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of procedures for handling complaints (standard 7) and must:

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- ensure the procedure sets out clear timescales for the management of the complaint (paragraph 7(c))
 - ensure the procedure provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations which stipulate that the complainant, proprietors and headteacher and where relevant, the person complained about, are given a copy of any findings and recommendations (paragraph 7(i))
 - ensure the procedure provides for written records to be kept of all complaints indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage, or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing (paragraph 7(j))
 - ensure the procedure provides for correspondence, statements and records of complaints to be kept confidential (paragraph 7(k)).

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

School details

Name of school	Wickham Court School		
DfES number	305/6079		
Unique reference number	134175		
Type of school	Mixed		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 2002		
Age range of pupils	2-12		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 62	Girls: 35	Total: 97
Number of children receiving funded nursery education	Boys: 12	Girls: 12	Total: 24
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4402- £7110		
Address of school	Schiller International Layhams Road West Wickham Kent BR4 9HN		
Telephone number	020 8777 2942		
Fax number	020 8777 4276		
Email address	wickham@schillerintschool.com		
Headteacher	Mrs Barbara Hunter		
Proprietor	Mrs L. Harries		
Reporting inspector	Ian Hartland HMI		
Dates of inspection	13 June 2007		