

Barbara Speake Stage School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	307/6050
Unique Reference Number	101948
Inspection number	316906
Inspection dates	19-20 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton

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



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

Barbara Speake Stage School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged three and a half to 16 years. The school specialises in teaching the performing arts. It was opened in 1963 by the current proprietor, Miss Barbara Speake and she and the head teacher, her nephew, are in charge of the day to day running of the school. There are currently 131 pupils on roll. The school is held in a range of buildings in East Acton. A theatrical agency provides the opportunity for pupils to work professionally during their time at school.

Evaluation of the school

The training in the performing arts, which the pupils receive at Barbara Speake Stage School and the opportunities they have to work professionally alongside their studies are good. The quality of the academic education is satisfactory with some aspects of the curriculum and teaching needing attention. The pupils are friendly towards each other, mix well together and report that they enjoy the performing arts aspect of the curriculum. This is the first inspection of the school under s162A of the Education Act 2005 and there are a number of regulations that are not met. Local Education Authority advisers have visited to give advice in the interim.

Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory and has some good features, mainly in the creative arts. As a specialist stage school, there is a strong focus on performing arts subjects including dancing, singing, theatre studies, expressive arts and drama. Pupils cover the main academic aspects of the curriculum and the creative arts. The youngest children follow the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage and make satisfactory progress. However, the school does not have an over-arching curriculum policy and there is no significant cross-curriculum planning. There are individual subject policies of varying detail, which are used by staff to plan their lessons, but there are some omissions. For example, the absence of a scheme of work for senior pupils in English, due to a sudden staff departure, has recently had a detrimental impact on teaching and learning for Year 11 pupils, as it is unclear what aspects of the curriculum still need addressing.

There is no planned programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) though some of this is taught incidentally. The school plans to introduce citizenship

lessons. The oldest pupils are given some informal advice about the next stage of their education and say that they would welcome additional help.

There is no qualified special needs teacher and the class teachers support pupils who need additional help; this is working satisfactorily. Pupils have limited access to organised extra-curricular activities. Over the past year the school has organised occasional trips and also theatre visits for the older pupils in connection with their studies. Parents and pupils express the view that there are insufficient opportunities for additional activities, trips and visits outside lessons to enhance the curriculum.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and good in performing arts. Pupils enjoy these lessons; they concentrate, participate enthusiastically, and persevere at the task they have been given, behave well and consequently, make good progress. However, in some lessons expectations are not always high enough and teaching strategies are limited with too much time spent on pupils listening to staff and insufficient time on purposeful and interesting activities to extend their learning. As a result, pupils make limited progress in these lessons and do not increase their understanding or knowledge of the subject sufficiently. On the whole teachers have sound subject knowledge and some display an enthusiasm for their subject.

The quality and use of assessment in teaching and learning is satisfactory for the senior pupils but is not sufficiently rigorous for the pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2. The teachers make effective use of informal assessment through question and answer in lessons and the school enters pupils for national tests. However, there is no formally defined, or regularly implemented, procedure for the assessment of pupils' learning in all key stages and it is therefore difficult for all teachers to monitor progress adequately. In some lessons in the lower school there is limited evidence of effective feedback to pupils and the learning intentions are not shared with them. In some cases there are limited opportunities for them to be involved in their own assessment or given sufficient feedback which may help them to recognise the next step they need to take to improve. The learning is not always tailored to the full range of pupils' needs and pupils are not sufficiently guided to assess their own work. Homework is generally given and marked. Pupils' class work is marked but there are few comments on what the pupils could do next to improve their learning. Resources are adequate and used well but some textbooks are in need of replacement. Most of the rooms are welcoming learning environments with some displays of pupils' work, especially in the classes of the younger pupils.

Pupils make satisfactory progress in the academic subjects and good progress in the creative arts. Many parents in the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that they were not sufficiently well informed about their children's progress. There is no formal parents' evening at which parents can discuss their children's progress. Parents can make an appointment to speak to staff but they do not always have the opportunity to see their child's work. Parents are given an annual report, which gives an account of their children's achievements and behaviour but does not give sufficient information about what they have learnt and what they need to do next to improve.

The school carries out national tests at Key Stage 2 and 3 and pupils achieve commendable results. Pupils take GCSE examinations and achieve satisfactory results in the academic subjects and good results in the creative arts subjects. They also take dance and musical theatre examinations with a registered board and generally achieve high grades.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is satisfactory. The creative arts training instils self-confidence in pupils. Behaviour is good within the firm disciplined regime. Attendance is satisfactory and the school is careful to record when pupils are off site for working purposes. The younger pupils report that they enjoy school, saying, '*I like my teachers, they help me when I ask*' and '*I love dancing*'. They especially enjoy engaging in the creative arts and in lessons seen, they sang with good techniques and danced to a high standard. Some pupils like the opportunity to 'work', which is paid employment organised by the theatrical agency run by the family.

The oldest pupils demonstrate more dissatisfaction with the school but still enjoy the opportunity to perform and excel in the creative arts, although they feel that some aspects of the academic education are not sufficiently rigorous. On the whole the school does not promote self-awareness and respect for the growing maturity of its older pupils. There are limited opportunities for the older pupils to take initiative in the school but younger pupils are given small tasks of responsibility. The pupils are encouraged to exercise regularly but there is limited evidence to suggest that they are encouraged to eat healthily. There are limited opportunities for spiritual awareness and religious education is not taught. Currently the pupils do not have sufficient understanding of public services and institutions in England because there is no citizenship programme in place. Some subjects such as English and history broaden pupils' cultural experience. However, further enrichment is hindered by the absence of regular trips to galleries and museums. There is a wide racial mix in the school and pupils are respected and valued for themselves and overall there are sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of their own and others people's culture.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Overall, the school makes satisfactory provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils. The pupils feel that the staff know them all well and are solicitous for their welfare. If pupils need first aid treatment there are trained first aiders on site who record all accidents. The school has a behaviour and anti-bullying policy. The pupils report that there is no bullying. The school has had some success with pupils who have moved to the school as a result of an unhappy experience, possibly bullying elsewhere. There is a range of health and safety policies but some are in need of updating in view of current guidance, including the policy for safeguarding children and all staff have not received up-to-date training. The school has not carried out

any formal risk assessments for visits out of the school, nor has it devised an appropriate policy in line with current guidance. Pupils are supervised in lessons but there is insufficient supervision around the school at break and lunchtimes. The school keeps the admission and attendance registers in line with regulations. The school does not fulfil its duties with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Concerns raised by some pupils during the inspection are being examined by the appropriate bodies.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has a satisfactory system for checking the suitability of staff to work with children and has followed correct procedures for the most recent staff appointments.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are satisfactory. The school is held in a former church hall, which has had extensive additions over the years including several new classrooms recently. This new area of the school at the rear of the main building is attractive and well decorated. Many corridor walls around the older part of the school are painted black and these areas can be very dark with some very narrow corridors. In some areas of the school there are problems with ventilation as not all windows open satisfactorily and this leads to a lack of fresh air. The main dance studio has had the wooden floor and stage replaced recently and the creative arts areas are suitable for their purpose. Some areas of the school are in need of refurbishment; especially some flooring needs replacing. Pupils report and some parents confirmed that girls and boys in the senior school do not have privacy when changing, for example into exercise wear, and this situation must be rectified immediately. The standard of cleanliness in the school is satisfactory but there is no hot water available in the pupils' toilets. Some parents and pupils complained that soap and toilet paper are not routinely available and standards of hygiene are insufficiently high. There is one small fenced area at the front of the school used for break-times and playtimes, which are staggered due to the number of pupils at the school.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school gives parents a satisfactory range of information. There is an informative prospectus and a website, but this is currently very out of date. The parents are given an occasional newsletter.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a set of procedures, which 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 the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- provide and implement an over-arching curriculum policy and ensure that schemes of work for all academic subjects, in each key stage are available and implemented fully (paragraph 1(2))
- provide and monitor the implementation of a planned PSHE curriculum across the school (paragraph 1(2)(f))
- ensure that all teachers have a good understanding of pupils' prior attainments and take these into consideration when they plan their teaching (paragraph 1 (3)(d))
- establish an assessment framework for the lower school and use this information to enable all pupils to make further progress (paragraph 1(3)(g)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (standard 2) and must:

- provide pupils with a broader knowledge of public institutions and services in England (paragraph 2(d)).

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

- ensure that all staff receive safeguarding training and update the policy in line with DCSF *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education (2007)* (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- prepare a health and safety policy for educational visits in line with current guidance and carry out detailed risk assessments on all visits outside school (paragraph 3(2)(c))
- ensure that the school has regard to the DCSF guidance *Health and safety: responsibilities and powers* (DCSF 0803/2001) (paragraph 3(4))
- ensure that pupils are sufficiently supervised at all times (paragraph 3(7))

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

- provide hot water in all the pupils' washrooms (paragraph 5(a))
- ensure that senior age pupils are provided with separate changing facilities for boys and girls at all times (paragraph 5(j))
- ensure that there are high standards of hygiene in place in all areas of the school and that toilet paper and soap are available at all times (paragraph 5(n))

- improve the ventilation in the classrooms (paragraph 5(p))
- improve those areas of flooring in corridors that require repair (paragraph 5 (s))

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	Barbara Speake Stage School		
DCSF number	307/6050		
Unique reference number	101948		
Type of school	Specialist Stage school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1963		
Age range of pupils	3.5-16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll	Boys: 55	Girls: 76	Total: 131
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number of children receiving funded nursery education	Boys: 5	Girls: 8	Total: 13
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,886 - £4,500		
Address of school	East Acton Lane East Acton London W3 7EG		
Telephone number	0208743 1306		
Fax number	0208743 1306		
Email address	cpuk@aol.com		
Headteacher	Mr David Speake		
Proprietor	Miss Barbara Speake MBE		
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton		
Dates of inspection	19-20 September 2007		