

# La Petite Ecole Française

Independent French Nursery School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	207/6387
Unique Reference Number	100545
Inspection number	316940
Inspection dates	7-8 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Marianick Ellender-Gelé 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 Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the school

The "Petite Ecole Française" is a nursery school situated in Notting Hill in the borough of Kensington and Chelsea. It was established in 1983 to serve the French speaking community in London. The school is part of the French national education system and reflects its philosophy, objectives and curriculum programmes. The great majority of children are bilingual (French and English) and transfer to the French Lycée (Lycée Français Charles de Gaulle) or the Ecole Primaire Jacques Prévert. A small number of children use a third language at home and come from a range of countries including Morocco, Algeria, Lebanon, Iran and Africa. The school's main aim is to ensure that each child develops into a confident and happy pupil able to thrive in either a French or English educational environment. Although a relaxed family atmosphere prevails, there is a strong expectation that children at this school will achieve their academic potential. This nursery is part of a consortium of French London schools. The headteacher has close professional links with the French authorities and colleagues from similar schools in London.

## Evaluation of the school

The quality of education provided by the school is good. The curriculum allows children to explore new concepts and learn effectively. It is planned well to include all creative areas of learning and to ensure thorough acquisition of language and numerical skills. The development of oracy is particularly excellent. Teaching is good and preparation for transfer to the primary school is meticulous. Children receive very effective care and individual support. This, combined with their eagerness to discover the world around them, leads to good progress. The already high level of knowledge that children bring to the school, in particular their linguistic capability and the good range of their vocabulary, added to a broad programme of personal, social and health education provide for good social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. The provision for the welfare, health and safety of all children is very good. The school complies with nearly all of the regulations.

## Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. The areas of learning, stipulated by the French programmes of study, are covered well and time allocated is balanced to ensure good progress in all skills. There is, however, insufficient use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching and learning. Provision for the

development of oracy and opportunities to develop the artistic aspects of learning through the "Projet d'école" are notable strengths. The curriculum prepares children very well for the next steps in their education and for life in a multi-lingual and multi-cultural society. The provision for teaching children about the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle and keeping safe is good. The school makes good use of local amenities, such as the local Memorial Garden and sports facilities. The extra-curricular programme is effective and enhances subjects well, for example in music, dance and drama.

Children learn effectively because teaching is good. Teaching shows good specialist knowledge and thorough preparation of classroom activities. All classroom staff are bilingual. Their expertise and pedagogical approach are matched well to the needs of this nursery. English staff lead high-quality workshops which enable all children to practise the English language in real contexts. Teachers and classroom assistants work very well together and are highly committed to the welfare and academic progress of their class. Teaching has a positive impact on children's learning thanks to small group work and positive use of praise. There is, however, room for improvement to ensure that activities match more closely the already high levels of knowledge that some able children bring to the class. Relationships are very good, helping children's motivation and diligence. Assessment is based on the French system which includes on-going reviews and formal evaluations twice per year. This is managed well and informs parents of progress made in all skills and areas of learning. The tracking of each child's development and progress is thorough with special educational needs spotted in a timely manner to ensure well-targeted specialist support.

Children start school with knowledge and skills that are above those typical of three-year-olds. Consequently, children who are very able require more consideration when lessons are planned to ensure progression, develop their independence and fulfil their potential. Over time, children's mathematical, social and physical skills develop well and older children demonstrate increased confidence. If they encounter difficulties, teachers provide good academic and welfare support. The team and family approach of the teaching, along with small group work and workshops, encourage progress and commitment. Children try hard, show respect and eagerness to do well. Progress in listening and speaking skills is excellent. There are often more girls than boys in teaching groups but the teaching is skilful enough to ensure that all children regardless of gender make the progress they deserve.

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

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Children are very friendly and welcoming of visitors showing great personal inquisitiveness and joy for learning. Throughout the school, behaviour is very good. Children attend regularly, and approach lessons with good levels of interest and concentration. They respond well to praise and cooperate well with their teachers. Meals are enjoyable social occasions, taken with staff, and contribute to their social development.

The specific programmes, called "Vivre Ensemble" for younger children and the Knowledge and Understanding of the world for older ones, contribute effectively to children's spiritual and moral development, although there are comparatively few opportunities for them to reflect on their ideas and actions. Children make a good contribution to their own community and take responsibility in class. A relevant programme of visits and visitors encourages children's awareness of British institutions such as the monarchy. Cultural development is very good and there is a high degree of racial harmony. From their earliest days in the school children are immersed in the French and English language. By the time they leave, all are bi-lingual. They have good opportunities to learn about the many cultures represented at the school.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils are good. Children know how to keep safe. They are very well cared for. The school has effective policies and practices in place and the headteacher ensures that all are updated as required. Teachers are diligent about the safety of all children and risk assessments are carefully made. The school is in the process of completing an assessment under the Disability Discrimination Act, although it is currently seeking alternative accommodation and will therefore revise its plans as required. Children with temporary mobility issues are provided for effectively.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Checks with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) for the suitability of staff to work with children are carried out for all staff employed in the school and all long serving members of staff have been subject to the appropriate checks. Procedures for appointing staff are appropriate and rightly involve the taking up of professional references and checking qualifications.

## School's premises and accommodation

Premises and accommodation are of a good standard. The school is housed in a beautiful Victorian building and these home surroundings make a very positive contribution to children's learning and personal development. Although the rooms and the outdoor play area are small, the school makes good use of its accommodation and takes pupils to local facilities such as parks and playgrounds as often as possible.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school sends out appropriate materials to inform parents and prospective parents of the school's objectives and policies. Reports to parents match the French system of two end-of-term evaluations. However some information in the documentation to parents is not clear enough as itemised in the section below.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The procedures for handling complaints comply with 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 provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- provide the name of the headteacher in the welcome pack to parents or other documentation (paragraph 6(2)(a))
- provide the full name of the proprietor and address for correspondence during both term time and holidays and a telephone number or numbers on which he may be contacted (paragraph 6(2)(b))
- ensure that parents are aware that they can request the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j))
- Make clear to parents that they can request the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 6(2)(k)).

## 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:

- make better use of ICT to support teaching and learning
- plan lessons more rigorously so that activities meet the needs of all more able children.

## School details

Name of school	La Petite Ecole Française
DCSF number	207/6387
Unique reference number	100545
Type of school	French nursery
Status	Independent
Date school opened	1983
Age range of pupils	3-5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 29      Girls: 31      Total: 60
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 6,600
Address of school	90 Oxford Gardens London W10 5UW
Telephone number	0208960 1278
Email address	lapetiteecolefrancaise@gmail.com
Headteacher	Ms Anne Stones
Proprietor	Sir David Henderson-Stewart
Reporting inspector	Marianick Ellender-Gelé HMI
Dates of inspection	7-8 November 2007