

Magdalen Court School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	8786045
Unique Reference Number	113623
Inspection number	316943
Inspection dates	30-31 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Andrew Redpath 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).

Inspection of funded nursery education was carried out under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

Inspection of day care was carried out under the Children Act 1989: Part XA (as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000) and, where funded nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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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

Magdalen Court School is a co-educational day school for children aged between three months and 18 years. It occupies a purpose-built building located in the centre of Exeter. Currently, there are 156 pupils attending the school. Three pupils have statements of special educational needs, two of whom have their places funded by their local authorities. The school has a registered nursery which was inspected by two child care inspectors during this inspection. The school was established in 1991 and is in the ownership of the Jenner Family Trust. It was last inspected in 2002. The school aims to provide *'firm discipline and a happy, caring, atmosphere which is conducive to learning.'* It also seeks to *'assist character building and leadership potential'* supported by a range of outdoor pursuits.

Evaluation of the school

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education and care. It achieves its aim to provide a happy environment where pupils' behaviour is good. The school meets most of the regulations, although some important ones relating to health and safety, and the safeguarding of pupils are not met. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. The school provides a broad range of experiences which includes all the required areas of learning. The curriculum takes close account of the National Curriculum and includes a good range of GCSE courses for secondary age pupils. Pupils do not have the opportunity to study food technology, which some say they would like. In keeping with its aims, there is a strong focus on physical challenge and outdoor pursuits. Physical Education (PE) is provided in the large sports hall, the local swimming pool and by a good range of outdoor pursuits. The school offers an acceptable programme for the small number of post-16 students and arranges for external tutors to provide additional A level courses where necessary. The curriculum is supported by a good range of outdoor adventurous activities, which includes skiing, canoeing and orienteering.

The quality of planning varies between subjects although it is satisfactory overall. Occasionally, classes contain pupils from more than one age group which presents a

challenge for teachers' planning. Schemes of work for some of these classes are only in place for the present academic year. The school is currently extending the content to ensure pupils study different topics as they move up the school. Planning for older pupils is based upon examination courses. There is a high degree of flexibility which allows many students to complete examination modules and achieve generally good GCSE passes before they reach Year 11.

There is a satisfactory programme for personal, social and health education. Older students in Year 10 and Year 11 study a GCSE in health and social care, which provides a suitable range of topics including relationships, keeping healthy and avoiding drug abuse. Pupils with learning difficulties receive regular individual support and those who have a statement of special educational needs have their requirements met in full. Many pupils complete work experience and are offered careers advice in response to individual requests. These arrangements are largely optional and do not form part of a comprehensive programme. As a result not all pupils benefit from appropriate careers guidance.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory. It is best in the classes for pupils aged between 11 and 16 years, where teachers' thorough subject knowledge and high expectations stimulate pupils to work hard. Teachers establish a positive climate for learning in lessons which ensures pupils settle quickly and display independent work habits. Opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively are limited, although a good example was seen in English when pupils discussed their response to literature in groups. The monitoring of teaching and learning is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure there is consistent practice across the school. The use of marking varies; it is usually quite brief and does not suggest how pupils might improve their work. Assessment and recording of pupils' progress are satisfactory in classes for older pupils where they are guided by examination modules. In other classes, assessment information is not always used to match work closely to each pupil's level of ability. As a result, some pupils struggle whilst others find the work relatively easy. The quality of provision in the nursery is satisfactory, although the new staff team have not yet developed fully their roles and responsibilities.

Pupils make satisfactory progress overall. They make good progress in Year 10 and Year 11 and most leave school with between five and 11 good GCSE grades each year. Progress in the primary classes and in the nursery is less marked because teaching is less challenging and targets are not used effectively. In the pre-school class there is limited space and the environment is not always used to best effect to support learning.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy their education and their attendance is good. They like being in small classes where as one pupil commented 'everyone knows everyone else'. The school is a friendly place where pupils show respect towards each other. Some, who had failed to thrive

in their previous school, cited this as a reason for joining the school. Pupils develop their spiritual awareness when they are encouraged to reflect and consider moral and religious themes in morning assemblies. Their self-esteem and self-confidence are raised through participation in the outdoor pursuits programme. Effort and achievement are recognised by the awarding of house points and badges and when they gain national awards such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Pupils' behaviour is good. They possess confident social skills and are polite and courteous in their discussions with visitors. Children's personal development in the nursery and pre-school class is satisfactory. They display a strong sense of belonging, but behaviour is not always managed to include an explanation of actions, which limits self-improvement.

Pupils' contribution to the school and wider community is satisfactory. Whilst some pupils have responsibilities for day-to-day management, for example through the school council which has worked with the cook to promote healthy eating, other opportunities are limited. More pupils would like to be involved in making decisions, of which they are very capable. Pupils learn to consider others and make a positive contribution to the wider community, for example when they raise money for charities. They develop their knowledge of their own and other cultures through the religious education, English, history and geography curricula. They also learn about public institutions in citizenship lessons and when they take part in elections for the school council. However, some of this work has only recently been introduced and it is not supported by a planned programme of visits to places of religious and cultural significance.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. The school provides a caring environment where pupils feel safe. Effective policies are in place to tackle any bullying and promote good behaviour. Pupils report that they can talk to 'almost any member of staff' to discuss any concerns in complete confidence. Despite this there are insufficient numbers of adults on duty during break times and lunchtimes to cover the complexities of the site. Pupils and a few parents would welcome tighter supervision at these times. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are unsatisfactory. There is a clear policy in place that is understood by staff. However, not all staff have received recent training in child protection. Pupils develop a good understanding of healthy food and healthy lifestyles. Physical exercise is promoted through the PE curriculum, swimming, outdoor pursuits and lunchtime clubs. However, not all older students take advantage of these opportunities, partly because of inadequate changing facilities. All the required health and safety policies and risk assessments are in place, including for visits away from school. However, the routine checking of the site to identify and rectify potential hazards is not sufficiently rigorous. At the time of the inspection, not all health and safety requirements were in place in the design and technology workshop, the girls' toilets lacked appropriate personal hygiene facilities and some fluorescent light tubes did

not have covers. There are several trained first-aiders and an appropriate first aid policy is in place. The school has a plan to improve access for disabled users which complies with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school's procedures for the recruitment and appointment of staff meet some, but not all, of the regulations. All staff have been subject to clearance at an enhanced level with the Criminal Records Bureau to ensure they are suitable to work with children. Also, a candidate's proof of identity, medical fitness and qualifications are checked. However, staff records do not always contain written references or a complete history of previous employment. The school does not maintain a central register to record its checks on staff and trust members.

School's premises and accommodation

Classrooms are of satisfactory size for the number of pupils using them in the main school and although space in the nursery is cramped, it is adequate. There are specialist rooms for teaching science, design and technology, information and communication technology, music, drama and art. Physical education and games are provided in a large sports hall. The school does not have appropriate facilities for pupils who are sick. There is suitable space for outside play which includes a grassed area, all-weather tennis courts, benches, climbing apparatus, and equipment for children in the nursery.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Most parents are very positive about the work of the school. They appreciate the school's 'open door' policy which enables them to discuss any issues or concerns. Parents feel well-informed about their children's progress. They meet with teachers formally each term and receive reports on their children which contain a good level of detail. The school produces an attractive prospectus which gives a good overview of its work. However, it does not provide all the required information and parents are not given accurate information about ownership of the nursery.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's complaints policy meets all the regulations. There has been one formal complaint in the past year which has been recorded appropriately.

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 appropriate careers guidance for secondary age pupils (paragraph 1(2)(g))
- assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use the information from such assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress (paragraph 1(3)(g)).

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 up-to-date training in child protection (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- have regard to the DCSF guidance *Health and Safety: responsibilities and powers* (DCFS 0803/2001) (paragraph 3(4))
- ensure school staff are deployed in such a way as to ensure the proper supervision of pupils (paragraph 3(7)).

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 (including volunteers), carry out appropriate checks to confirm their previous employment history and obtain written character references (paragraph 4(2)(a))
- keep a register of all staff which shows details of checks made against the requirements of the regulations, including the date on which each check was completed or the certificate obtained (paragraph 4C(2 and 3))
- keep a register of all persons named as the proprietor which shows details of checks made against the requirements of the regulations, including the date on which each check was completed or the certificate obtained (paragraph 4C(6 and 7))

- ensure the register in which the information is recorded is capable of being reproduced in legible form (paragraph 4C(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 particulars of the ownership of the nursery, including the address for correspondence during both term time and holidays, and a telephone number for contact at all times (paragraph 6(2)(b))
- 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 sanctions adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving (paragraph 6(2)(h))
 - particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations (paragraph 6(2)(i))
 - details of the complaints procedure adopted by the school, together with the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j)).

Inspection of day care registered by Ofsted

Effectiveness of the registered day care

The quality of care is satisfactory. Children in the nursery and after-school club are broadly content, settled and are developing a sense of belonging. Children take part in adequate play experiences including creative and outdoor play opportunities. However, these are not always sufficiently stimulating to fully engage younger children. Staff interact appropriately, although, management of children's behaviour is not consistent. Some staff with younger children have a negative approach often raising their voices, this does not set a good role model.

Children are cared for in bright surroundings. Effective security measures and staff's understanding of safeguarding issues contribute towards children's safety. Separate rooms are provided for different ages, although, space, staff supervision levels and

the monitoring of potential risks are not always effective in supporting children. Children's health is suitably supported through the daily routines.

Staff work closely with parents to discuss children's individual needs, daily books exchange information about younger children's routines. Appropriate documentation is in place. The new staff team is still developing which impacts on the children's care. The nursery has made some improvement since the last inspection. Records of staff attendance are in place, although organisation of the nursery and activities still needs developing. Staff have an understanding of safeguarding and follow procedures to minimise cross-infection. The setting meets the needs of the range of children who attend. Overall the outcomes for being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution and organisation are satisfactory.

Since the last inspection Ofsted received one complaint that required the provider or Ofsted to take action to meet the National Standards. The concerns related to Standards 1 (Suitable person), 2 (Organisation), 3 (Care, learning and play), 4 (Physical environment), 6 (Safety), 7 (Health), and 8 (Food and drink).

Ofsted visited unannounced and following the visit a notice of non-compliance was issued under National Standard 2, and actions set for National Standards 6, 7, 8, 12 and 14. Following a monitoring visit a further action was raised under National Standard 7. The provider responded to the actions, Ofsted was satisfied that appropriate steps had been taken and the provider remained qualified for registration.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

Recommendations or actions to improve the registered day care

To improve the quality and standards of the care the registered person should take account of the following recommendations:

- continue to develop staff's understanding of maintaining a safe environment for children, and ensure that greater levels of supervision are in place at all times of the day
- improve learning outcomes for younger children by providing activities and experiences that are stimulating, promote children's language and keep them fully engaged and interested
- develop staff's awareness and understanding of effective ways to manage children's behaviour
- improve organisation of space and resources for children, to make sure

children can freely and safely explore their environment at all times

- continue to develop the team structure and key worker systems so they are fully effective in supporting children's needs.

Inspection of funded nursery education

Effectiveness of the funded nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage, but are not all clear of what they intend children to learn. Children benefit from staff who teach with warmth and enthusiasm. However, the room is small and cramped. It becomes noisy at times and difficult for some activities to be utilised. This then has a negative impact on children's behaviour, concentration and some areas of learning. Children's progress is monitored appropriately through termly reports. However, there is no system for planning their next steps of learning and observations are not linked to planning. As a result, children are not being encouraged to develop to their full potential in all areas. Older children benefit from time in the infants' classroom where they enjoy further challenges in a more focused environment.

Most children are happy, independent learners with a sound sense of belonging. They are not all developing a good understanding of how to behave positively, mostly due to lack of consistency and reinforcement. They communicate with confidence and are learning about sounds, letters and early reading skills. Children write freely and some can form letters correctly. They are learning to recognise shapes, but rarely use mathematical language spontaneously in their play, such as counting. Children benefit from a good range of physical activities each day to promote their health and fitness. They sing with enthusiasm and use their imaginations well. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. They are well informed of the teaching methods and their child's stage of development. Children also take homework books with them at the end of each session to complete activities with parents at home.

Leadership and management of the nursery education are satisfactory. The setting has some systems in place to monitor the quality of nursery education. However, these are not sufficient to ensure planning and the environment are always used effectively to promote all areas of children's learning.

Recommendations or actions to improve the funded nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of the nursery education the registered person should take account of the following recommendations:

- develop planning systems to ensure all areas of learning are promoted well and staff are clear of the learning intentions
- improve systems of monitoring and assessing children's progress to ensure their next steps of learning are planned and challenges are meaningful
- improve the systems used by staff for managing behaviour to develop children's understanding of how to behave positively
- develop systems to monitor the quality of nursery education to improve use of the environment and children's learning in all areas.

School details

Name of school	Magdalen Court School		
DCSF number	8786045		
Unique reference number	113623		
Unique reference number (day care)	EY334962		
Unique reference number (funded nursery education)	EY334962		
Type of school	Co-educational day school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1991		
Age range of pupils	1-18 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 61	Girls: 95	Total: 156
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 3	Girls: 0	Total: 3
Number of children receiving day care	Boys: 19	Girls: 31	Total: 50
Number of children receiving funded nursery education	Boys: 6	Girls: 13	Total: 19
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,650 - £6,450		
Address of school	Mulberry House Victoria Park Road Exeter Devon EX2 4NU		
Telephone number	01392 494919		
Fax number	01392 494919		
Email address	johnjenner_exeter@hotmail.com		
Headteacher	Mr J Bushrod		
Proprietor	Mr & Mrs Jenner		
Reporting inspector	Andrew Redpath HMI		
Childcare inspector	Dinah Round		
Dates of inspection	30-31 January 2008		