

Park School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	878/6040
Unique Reference Number	113617
Inspection number	316946
Inspection dates	29-30 November 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).

Inspection of funded nursery education was carried out 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

Park School is an independent school for boys and girls aged three to eleven years of age. It was founded in 1986 and is housed in a range of buildings which form part of the Dartington Hall Estate, near Totnes in Devon. There are 69 pupils on roll, 24 of whom receive government funding for their nursery places. This is the first inspection of the school under section 162A of the Education Act 2005, but the nursery was last inspected in 2005.

The school aims to *'provide a human scale education geared to the holistic development of all its pupils.'*

Evaluation of the school

Parents are very keen on Park School. One referred to it as: *'a wonderful, happy, welcoming and encouraging school'*. Another noted: *'How lucky are the kids'*. It is indeed a good school, which provides a good standard of education and satisfactory standard of care, where pupils are generally well taught using a satisfactory curriculum. With the support of very committed parents, pupils make good progress. There are a number of regulations the school does not meet.

Quality of education

The curriculum in the Nursery is based on the Foundation Stage guidance. It is very well planned, stimulating and suitably challenging. In the main school the curriculum is satisfactory with many good features. It is based on literacy, numeracy, the creative arts, which includes art, drama and music, physical activities that include canoeing, cycling and games and environmental science. This curriculum reflects the school's aim of providing a human scale curriculum where the needs of each individual child are central. The personal, social, and health education curriculum is at the centre of the school's philosophy and very effectively promotes the social and emotional development of the pupils. Much of the curriculum is based on practical activity and first hand experience. The extensive grounds of the Dartington Hall Estate are used effectively for environmental science projects. However, the written schemes of work lack sufficient detail in a minority of subjects. The school has identified the need to improve this planning to show how each subject is progressively and consistently taught.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. There is some outstanding teaching in the early years. Throughout the school the relationships between staff and pupils are very good and pupils respond well to the kind and caring staff. They make good progress. Pupils develop independence, as they are able to make some choices about their learning. There is good use of resources, for example one class visited the local recycling centre and were engaged in re-using materials for artwork. Opportunities are used very effectively to stimulate the pupils by using the local environment. This, when done well, gives a good link between subjects and enables effective learning. Staff know the pupils and their capabilities very well and use this knowledge to give them meaningful tasks which match their abilities. Staff regularly use praise and encouragement, which helps to motivate pupils to learn.

In some less effective lessons it is not made clear to the pupils what they are going to learn, but only what they are going to do. This leads to some confusion, lack of rigour in teaching and lack of pace for some pupils. On the whole, pupils behave well. The assessment of pupils' learning in lessons is good, which together with good oral feedback, keeps the pupils well informed about the progress they are making. The staff use the early years profiles effectively for the younger pupils. Staff compile pupils' records of achievement, which include annotated examples of their work and photographs to show their progress over time. These now need to be more systematically reviewed. There is some good marking with careful annotation of the pupils' work which gives both the parents and the pupils a clear idea of the progress they are making. However, in some cases the pupils' work is not marked or the marking is not focused sufficiently on their learning needs.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school places strong emphasis on building confidence and promoting self-esteem. As a result of this encouragement, pupils enjoy coming to school and are enthusiastic and excited about their learning. Older pupils use phrases to describe their school experience such as: *'I love this school, it's not like any other school'* with a younger pupil saying: *'I love my teacher, she is the best one I have ever had.'* The school's ethos ensures that pupils learn to distinguish between right and wrong. The behaviour of most pupils is good. Pupils are encouraged to make a positive contribution to the community. Many respond by volunteering to help teachers in class. Pupils begin to develop a good understanding of their environment and public institutions. This is well supported by visitors from the community. Regular school council meetings provide pupils with a voice in the school. The school is now corresponding with a home for vulnerable children in South Africa and this experience has given pupils an understanding of other children's lives. Through their creative arts lessons pupils have many opportunities for spiritual reflection. The school curriculum ensures that pupils develop a clear understanding of their own cultures and the diversity of their environment. For example, pupils had the opportunity to celebrate Divali under the tuition of a professional Indian dancer.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils is satisfactory, but some welfare policies and procedures are not in place or fail to meet current guidelines. The school has an anti-bullying policy, which is implemented. The school is aware of safeguarding issues but the policy does not reflect up-to-date guidance and the designated child protection officer has yet to attend appropriate training. The school responded promptly when told of this omission and has booked staff onto the next available training course. The pupils make regular visits outside school but there is not a suitable policy to reflect the care taken by staff to ensure that pupils are safe. The pupils have the opportunity to spend time in the extensive school grounds where they can climb trees, make dens and explore the natural world. However there are insufficient staff on duty at all times to ensure the pupils' safety. The school carries out regular fire drills and has undertaken a fire risk assessment. The school has carried out a health and safety risk assessment on all areas of the premises. There are several staff members with first aid training. All pupils are encouraged to eat healthily, and many enjoy the wholesome vegetarian lunch cooked on the premises. They all take very regular exercise in the extensive grounds. Attendance is good. The attendance and admission registers are kept according to regulations. The school has not yet fulfilled its duties with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school checks all staff to ensure their suitability to work with children and holds a single central register of staff checks. However, some members of the Council of Management have not yet been checked and are not included on the central register.

School's premises and accommodation

The school's premises and accommodation are suitable. The classrooms are attractive learning environments decorated with examples of pupils' work celebrating achievements. The school does not have facilities for pupils who are ill. The buildings are in a satisfactory state of repair but the interior decoration is not of a satisfactory standard of decoration. The school is sited in an attractive woodland setting and surrounded on three sides by garden and play areas, which are used extensively by the pupils for adventurous outdoor play and environmental studies.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides parents, carers and others with a good range of information through an attractive prospectus, welcome pack and regular, informative newsletters. In line with the school's philosophy each child's education is a shared responsibility. Parents are very involved with the life of school and make contributions in a variety of ways, for example helping in tasks around the school and undertaking maintenance. The working partnership of parents, children and teachers contributes to the very friendly atmosphere and the high quality of

relationships in the school. A large number of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the school. They all confirm that their children like coming to school. There are regular consultation meetings between parents and staff and the school provides each pupil with an annual written review of their work, which they share with their parents. In a delightfully informal way the reviews convey to parents the progress their children have made and what they could do next to improve their learning.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a set of procedures which meets 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 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 Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education (2007)* (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- prepare a policy for health and safety on visits outside the school which reflects current DCSF guidance (paragraph 3(2)(c))
- ensure that sufficient staff are on duty at all times during play times (paragraph 3(7)).

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

- ensure that each member of the governing body has an enhanced CRB check (paragraph 4B (4) and (5))
- include this information on the school's central register of checks (paragraph 4C (6) and (7)).

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))
- improve the standard of decoration (paragraph 5(q)).

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

Inspection of funded nursery education

Effectiveness of the funded nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Teaching is inspiring and challenging. Staff have a natural ability to instinctively grasp every opportunity to further develop and extend children's learning. Everyday routines like snack time are used very effectively to develop children's concept of shape.

Staff are very well informed about the children's individual starting points and interests, having very high expectations for their achievements. They have an excellent understanding of the Foundation Stage and learning through play. The child-centred planning provides a balanced curriculum, which provides excellent support to enable each child to progress at their own individual pace.

Staff regularly observe and assess children's progress. Children are actively encouraged to keep a record of their achievements. Consequently, children are proud of their achievements, raising their self esteem and helping them to make excellent progress towards the early learning goals.

The excellent use of both indoor and outdoor play areas means that children are exceptionally well motivated to learn. Therefore, children are very skilled at climbing and balancing. In addition, children interact with each other negotiating plans and activities. Children with learning difficulties and those who are learning English as an additional language receive effective support from staff who work closely with other professionals and parents to provide a fully inclusive curriculum. Different languages like French are used everyday to further extend all children's understanding of the wider world.

The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Staff place very strong emphasis on helping children consider and respect others. Consequently, children behave exceptionally well which has a significant impact on their learning.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. The nursery is strongly committed to working with parents, actively encouraging them to help their children learn at home. In addition, the children's profiles are shared with parents.

The leadership and management of the nursery are outstanding. Therefore, the nursery has made very good progress since the last inspection. The staff team really enjoy working with the children. This means they consistently and naturally reflect on their own practise. This further develops and improves outcomes for the children.

School details

Name of school	Park School		
DCSF number	878/6040		
Unique reference number	113617		
Unique reference number (funded nursery education)	EY295964		
Type of school	Nursery and primary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1986		
Age range of pupils	3-11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 22	Girls: 24	Total: 46
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 17	Girls: 6	Total: 23
Number of children receiving funded nursery education	Boys: 18	Girls: 6	Total: 24
Annual fees	£3,507 - £5,232		
Address of school	Park Road		
	Dartington		
	Totnes		
	Devon		
	TQ9 6EQ		
Telephone number	01803 864588		
Email address	park@schooldartington.freemove.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr R Hickman		
Proprietor	Council of Management of Park School		
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton		
Childcare inspector	Christine Slaney		
Dates of inspection	29-30 November 2007		