

The New School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	878/6046
Unique Reference Number	113624
Inspection number	316966
Inspection dates	6-7 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Eileen McAndrew

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. A separate inspection of funded nursery education was carried out under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and framework Act 1998.

Information about the school

The New School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged between three and seven years of age. It was opened in September 1992. It is situated in Exminster on the outskirts of Exeter in Devon. Admission is non-selective. No pupil has a statement of special educational need. At the time of the inspection there were 52 pupils on roll. The school's aim is to provide *'a solid grounding in the key skills without losing sight of the child-centred creative aspect of an infant environment'*. This is the school's first inspection.

Evaluation of the school

The New School exceeds its aim and provides an outstanding education. The good quality curriculum ensures a varied and interesting learning experience for all pupils. Teaching is outstanding and as a consequence pupils of all abilities make outstanding progress. They become highly effective learners who are exceptionally well motivated and increasingly able to work independently. The personal development of pupils is outstanding. They are well cared for and procedures for welfare, health and safety are satisfactory. Pupils love coming to school and parents are unanimously supportive of the school. The school meets almost all of the regulatory requirements.

Quality of education

The good quality curriculum provides a secure framework through which pupils learn very effectively. It provides an interesting and broad learning experience which includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education (RE). The curriculum is planned around a series of topics agreed through discussion by staff and covered by all classes across the school within a four year cycle.

Termly planning consists of an outline scheme of work across the curriculum for each class. Brief weekly planning makes clear what will be taught and specifies the activities pupils will undertake. However, it does not identify precisely what pupils of different ages will learn, making it more difficult to ensure that pupils learn new ideas and knowledge logically in all subjects across the school, particularly when changes of staff occur. Nevertheless, the topic framework is exploited imaginatively. It results in exceptional outcomes, as for example, in the focus on *'Toys'* with

outstanding work from pupils in technology, art and design, science and literacy. English and mathematics are given a high priority, being included in the central topic and also taught as discrete subjects. This strong emphasis contributes to the pupils' outstanding progress and achievement in these areas. Planning takes good account of the needs of pupils who have learning difficulties and ensures that all pupils, including the more able, have opportunities to work at a challenging level. Peripatetic specialist teaching in music, speech and drama, physical education and information and communication technology (ICT) extends the curriculum. Opportunities after school for lessons in French, gymnastics, tennis and ballet further enrich provision.

The quality of teaching is outstanding, resulting in commensurate progress by pupils. The teachers display a high level of professional expertise and a thorough knowledge of the subjects taught. They build well on the outstanding provision in the Nursery and Reception class. Their classroom organisation and management are of a high quality resulting in a brisk pace for lessons, productive use of time and rapid progress for pupils. These strong features do much to compensate for the lack of detail in planning because teachers' practice is so highly skilled and effective.

Teachers evidently enjoy their work and believe that pupils should enjoy their learning. This enthusiasm is palpable and results in pupils who love coming to school and are able to work with unusually high levels of concentration and motivation. Pupils ask questions about anything they might not understand. Teachers listen, giving pupils time to think, frame a response and explain what they want to say.

Interesting and imaginative opportunities are planned so that pupils become increasingly able to take responsibility for their learning and to make choices about their work. They regularly choose to work in groups or pairs and are able to support and learn from each other with increasing facility.

The teaching is differentiated to meet individual needs while maintaining a strong emphasis on the learning objectives of the lesson. The number of pupils in each class is small and teachers know individual pupils well, so they are able to give them swift and direct support. All pupils are challenged by tasks which expect them to recall previous learning, express a view or explain their thinking to others. The strong focus on speaking and listening helps pupils to become highly articulate and confident speakers. Pupils are lively and enthusiastic learners and take satisfaction from their achievement.

Systems for assessment are good and very effectively implemented. Pupils' work is routinely scrutinised in class and is marked regularly and assiduously. Comments on pupils' work make clear to them why their work is good and tells them what they need to do next to improve it. In discussion, pupils said they knew they were making good progress because teachers told them, marked their work and gave them stickers for doing well. Progress is assessed and recorded regularly across all areas of pupils' academic, creative, personal, social and physical development. Assessment

is used to inform future planning, helping to secure progress and to contribute to the detailed twice-yearly reports for parents.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is outstanding as a result of the school's rich provision. Mutual trust and respect are significant elements in the ethos of this school. From the youngest age, pupils' sense of their own uniqueness and individuality is fostered, alongside a clear understanding of their being part of the family of the school. In consequence, they develop self-confidence and self-reliance, increasingly able to take responsibility for their learning. This lays a strong foundation for their future development and economic well-being. Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves are outstanding. The staff wholeheartedly encourage and support the pupils, who respond by trying hard at their work, enjoying school and achieving highly.

Behaviour is outstanding in class and elsewhere. Pupils distinguish right from wrong and grow increasingly aware of how their conduct affects others. They listen to each other, cooperate willingly, take turns and respond with ease and openness. Pupils say they love coming to school and their attendance is consistently high. They believe they make good progress which will help them when they move to their next school and as they grow up.

Spiritual and emotional development is fostered from the early years as pupils learn to reflect in circle time on their own and others' feelings. Work in RE extends understanding of the notion of belief through learning about major world faiths, and helps them to recognise and appreciate difference. The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn about life, including public institutions and services, in their own society and to explore and understand the achievements of other cultures.

The school celebrates achievement and encourages pupils to widen their horizons through taking part in local and national competitions. Pupils contribute to the life of the school through undertaking routine tasks in class and around the school and through opportunities to use their talents and skills in performances for their parents and others in the community.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. The school has a distinctive family ethos in which pupils feel valued and cared for. The outstanding relationships between staff and pupils contribute significantly to this sense of community and belonging which pupils experience. Child protection policy and procedures are in place but the designated person has not received training within the last two years and updated staff training is also overdue.

Fire prevention and fire-fighting procedures are established and equipment is regularly checked by specialist providers. The first aid policy is thorough and supported by a qualified member of staff. Wider staff training is planned.

Aspects of food and healthy eating are explored in science and curricular topics and are reinforced through daily snacks and at lunch times. Parents are actively encouraged to supply healthy foods for their children. Pupils understand that exercise is an important part of healthy living.

The admission and attendance registers comply fully with requirements.

The school does not have a three year plan to outline how it will meet its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Newly appointed staff are routinely subject to clearance with the Criminal Records Bureau at an enhanced level but the school has been slow in submitting a request for one recent appointment. The school has not carried out other essential checks before staff appointments are confirmed.

School's premises and accommodation

The school premises are in a Grade II Victorian church which has been remodelled and extended with sensitivity and skill to provide suitable accommodation. Good use is made of the nave to provide a hall, ICT area and library. The classroom space is used imaginatively to create stimulating learning environments in which pupils' work is displayed and celebrated. Arrangements for pupils who may become ill do not meet requirements.

The outside play space has attractive well-organised grassed and hard surface areas for recreation and physical education.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides parents with clear and useful information through its parents' handbook which has been recently updated. It gives helpful details of the school's expectations and outlines the organisation and approaches for each year group. Practical day-to-day routines and procedures are made explicit, as are the various ways parents can communicate easily and swiftly with teachers and the headteacher. Communication is highly successful as parents attested in their pre-inspection questionnaire responses and in their discussions with inspectors.

The high proportion of parents who responded to the questionnaire was unanimously supportive of the headteacher and staff. They believe the school provides very well

for their children and individual parents who spoke to inspectors were swift to give specific examples of the school's exemplary practice.

The recent development of the school's website contributes an additional dimension to its communication with parents and the wider community.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has recently reviewed its policy and procedures for handling complaints and it now meets the requirements in full.

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 the designated person for child protection receives training every two years and all staff every three years, in compliance with DCSF guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education* (2007) (paragraph 3 (2)(b)).

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, carry out appropriate checks to confirm their identity, medical fitness, previous employment history, character references and where appropriate, qualifications and professional references (paragraph 4 (2)(a))
- ensure that an enhanced criminal record check is made by the proprietor in respect of any member of staff appointed to a position at the school before or as soon as is practicable after appointment (paragraph 4 (2)(b)).

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)).

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

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following point for development:

- continuing to refine planning to include what will be learned by each year group in all subject areas.

Inspection of funded nursery education

Effectiveness of the funded nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff know the children very well and plan interesting and challenging activities that promote their learning in all areas of the curriculum. Through regular observation and evaluation of activities staff identify what children already know and can do, and use this information effectively to plan their next steps for learning. All members of staff have a secure understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and are skilled in using a range of strategies to encourage children's progress and development.

Children have excellent dispositions towards learning. They are well-motivated, enthusiastic and enjoy grappling with new ideas. Their high levels of concentration enable them to persevere with both adult-led activities and those they initiate themselves. Children with learning difficulties receive excellent support from staff, who work closely with other professionals and with parents to promote children's progress and access to the curriculum.

The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered very well. They have very good opportunities to develop their sense of belonging within the community of the school. Their behaviour is excellent and they treat each other with great respect and kindness. This has a very positive impact on their learning. Children enjoy playing together, exchanging ideas and extending their learning through shared experiences.

The leadership and management of the funded education are outstanding. Teaching staff work closely together to monitor and evaluate delivery of the curriculum. They have an excellent commitment to improvement as they develop and implement new ideas to address areas they identify for improvement. Consequently, the school has made very good improvement since the last inspection. The staff team are committed to working closely with parents, and as a result the partnership with parents is outstanding. This has a very positive impact on their children's learning as they are well informed about the themes and activities their children participate in and how this promotes their progress towards the early learning goals.

School details

Name of school	The New School		
DCSF number	878/6046		
Unique reference number	113624		
Unique reference number (funded nursery education)	EY300009		
Type of school	Pre-preparatory		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	16 September 1992		
Age range of pupils	3-7 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 21	Girls: 20	Total: 41
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 4	Girls: 7	Total: 11
Number of children receiving funded nursery education	Boys: 10	Girls: 10	Total: 20
Annual fees	£ 4,239		
Address of school	The Avenue Exminster Exeter Devon EX6 8AT		
Telephone number	0139 2496122		
Email address	headmistress@thenewschoolexeter.co.uk		
Headteacher	Miss M Taylor		
Proprietor	Miss M Taylor		
Reporting inspector	Eileen McAndrew		
Childcare inspector	Heather Morgan		
Dates of inspection	6-7 December2007		