

Eastcourt Independent School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	317/6055
Unique Reference Number	102869
Inspection number	320351
Inspection dates	5-6 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Heather Yaxley 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

Eastcourt School is a long-established, selective independent school situated on the edge of the London Borough of Redbridge within a busy residential area. The school is registered to take 336 pupils between the ages of three and eleven. The Stepping Stones class provides part-time education for children of nursery age. The vast majority of pupils are from Asian and Afro-Caribbean heritages and some travel to the school from neighbouring London boroughs and Essex. The school aims to *help children grow into caring, well-educated individuals who have a good understanding and strong commitment to develop personal qualities that help the society in which we live, an appreciation of others, and tolerance and compassion to build a positive future*. In addition, the school aims to prepare pupils for grammar schools, public schools and other independent schools. The headteacher is also the proprietor and her family have owned the school since 1986. The school was last inspected in May 2005.

Evaluation of the school

Eastcourt School provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. Visitors to the school cannot fail to be impressed by the pupils' self-confidence, courtesy and their good manners. In this respect the school meets its stated aims, developing the pupils' personal skills well. Extensions and refurbishment of the premises provide the pupils with a purposeful and welcoming learning environment, making good use of the available space. The school does not meet the regulations to ensure the staff's suitability for working with children, and for the appropriate training in child protection. Accordingly, although appropriate attention is given to most aspects of their care, overall the welfare, health and safety for the pupils is inadequate. The school meets most other regulations. With the exception of one regulation for providing information to parents and carers, the school has addressed those not met at the last inspection. The requirement for the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 remains unmet.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory overall, including provision for the Foundation Stage. In the Stepping Stones and Reception classes, activities reflect the national guidance across the required areas of learning with an emphasis on teaching early reading, writing and number skills. It is also enriched by whole school events such as the school's celebrations for World Book Day. However, there is not a

good balance of teacher-directed and pupil-initiated activities. The curriculum is restricted by the lack of a dedicated outside play area.

In the infant and junior departments the curriculum generally meets the pupils' needs and encompasses all subjects of the National Curriculum along with religious education (RE). Some subjects, for example drama and French, are taught by subject specialists. Curriculum planning for English and mathematics is good and ensures that basic skills are developed well, but there are missed opportunities to develop these skills fully across the curriculum. The best schemes of work make good use of national guidance and are sufficiently detailed to show the work that will be taught for each year group. The schemes for too many other subjects are undeveloped and do not provide effective guidance to support the teachers' day-to-day planning.

Although a few parents and carers who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed concerns about the number of visits and outings, inspectors found that the curriculum is enhanced well by a good range of visits to places of interest. The strong bias towards English and mathematics, with less time devoted to other learning activities is also a concern to some. Inspectors found that although pupils' personal, social, and health education and citizenship and learning in RE are promoted satisfactorily, too little time is devoted to this area of learning and planning lacks sufficient coherence. A popular range of extra-curricular activities such as table-tennis and judo supports pupils' personal development well. In the absence of its own grassed area, the school makes appropriate use of the local park for physical activities. The school has a good computer suite that satisfactorily promotes pupils' skills in information and communication technology.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. The pupils enjoy their lessons and are generally very well-behaved in class. They are inquisitive and keen to learn. In the best lessons the pupils are actively engaged in a range of practical activities and have good opportunities to explain what they are learning. However, teachers' planning is not sufficiently detailed to extend learning. There is an over-reliance on worksheets. This limits the extent to which tasks can be tailored to meet the range of pupils' abilities and interests and restricts teachers' use of different teaching approaches. The marking of work is thorough with useful comments to help the pupils improve their work. Parents and carers have mixed feelings about homework. Some think that there is too much homework and that it is poorly organised during the week, others ask for increasing amounts of formal work to do with their children at home.

Assessment procedures in the school are satisfactory. From the Reception Year onwards, high priority is given to half-termly test in English and mathematics. Some parents and carers are concerned that there is too much testing, especially for younger children and that this puts unreasonable pressure on them. Whilst the tests give the school good information to track attainment in literacy and numeracy, not enough use is made of other teacher assessments that are linked generally to

National Curriculum levels. Similarly, the school makes no assessment of the children's skills on entry to the Foundation Stage.

The school has very high expectations for the pupils to succeed. The selection process for admission to the Reception Year ensures that the children start school with skills that are generally above those for their age. The pupils make satisfactory progress over their time at the school. The school's academic success is appreciated by the pupils and their families. Over the past two years all Year 6 pupils have transferred to a preferred secondary school. In 2007, of the 39 pupils who took the 11+ examination, 35 gained passes. A total of 56 entrance examination passes were gained for seven local public schools, with a further seven for other independent schools.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is stronger for their moral and social development than for spiritual and cultural development. School assemblies provide satisfactory opportunities to learn about different world religions but opportunities to relate this work directly to the pupils' lives and experience are missed. Cultural awareness is developed effectively through visits, for example to museums and places of worship, as well as in RE and art lessons. This supports the development of tolerance, and respect for different cultures and lifestyles. The pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong and get on well with each other. Older pupils support the school community well, for example, in helping the younger pupils with their reading. There is a good contribution to the work of local and national charities such as Children in Need. However, the pupils do not have any significant say in the running of the school and there is no channel for jointly expressing their views and ideas, apart from opportunities for Year 6 pupils. They have a satisfactory awareness of public institutions and services although the planning for this feature is not well developed.

The pupils demonstrate self-confidence and, even the youngest, were very willing to come and talk to inspectors. This confidence, coupled with good literacy and numeracy skills, make a positive contribution to their future economic well-being. Pupils' attitude to learning is good, as is their attendance and behaviour. They enjoy coming to school and are happy because of the good relationships that exist between themselves and the staff, and the good support they receive from the teachers, for whom they have much respect.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

This aspect of the school's work is inadequate overall because the child protection policy and associated training are not robust enough, and there are significant weaknesses in procedures to appoint staff. In general, there is a suitable range of policies and procedures in place to cover aspects of welfare, health and safety but too many lack sufficient detail. Nevertheless, the day-to-day running of the school

helps the pupils to know what it means to stay safe and healthy. The pupils respond positively to clear expectations regarding the food that they can bring to school and those who choose to take the recently introduced option of a school lunch appreciate its healthy content. Appropriate systems for behaviour management are in place to ensure that the pupils feel safe in school. Incidents of bullying or other forms of harassment are rare and the pupils know who to go to if they have a problem. The curriculum, although underdeveloped in this area, helps to develop pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy, including topics on bullying, conflict resolution, substance abuse, and making healthy choices. There are limited opportunities for physical exercise on-site.

The child protection policy is not sufficiently robust. It contains limited and, in one case, incorrect guidance for staff. All full-time staff have attended child protection awareness training but the training for designated staff is not yet complete. The school does not meet its responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 2006. Outline plans to improve accessibility to the building are in place but there is no three-year plan to improve accessibility to the premises and curriculum.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Recruitment procedures ensure that most appropriate checks are made to establish staff's suitability. However, these do not fully meet statutory requirements because not all have received the appropriate clearance to work with children and not all qualifications have been checked. A central register is in place to record all the statutory checks but, because the recording is not sufficiently robust, it is incomplete.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are of a good standard. They are well-maintained and provide a pleasant, welcoming environment that is conducive to learning. Limitations relating to the age and layout of the building are overcome well. For example, there are clear expectations for movement up and down narrow staircases, and staggered break times reduce the number of pupils on the playground at any one time. Classrooms are small but this does not have a negative impact on teaching and learning. The toilet facilities fall short of statutory requirements.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Information contained in the school's prospectus meets all of the regulations. A large majority of parents and carers responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and some included extensive comments. These are broadly positive. Whilst most are happy with all aspects of the school's work, a very small minority raise concerns around particular themes. The most prevalent are the wish to have more information about their child's progress, more opportunities to be healthy and take regular exercise, that homework is not well planned, and that not all understand the complaints procedures. Parents and carers receive satisfactory annual reports giving

school-based test results and brief comments on attainment and attitudes, covering a range of subjects. In addition, tests papers and results for English and mathematics are sent home each half term. There are two formal opportunities during the year to meet with class teachers.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's complaints policy meets all of the requirements with the exception of ensuring that correspondence remains confidential. There have been no formal complaints during the past year.

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:

- ensure that the curriculum is effectively supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work (paragraph 1(2))
- ensure that lessons are well-planned, that effective teaching methods and suitable activities are used and that class time is managed wisely (paragraph 1(3)(c))

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

- prepare and implement a revised written child protection policy to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with DCSF guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education* (2007), ensuring that the designated persons receive the appropriate up-to-date training (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

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

- ensure that prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff (including volunteers), appropriate checks have been carried out to confirm their qualifications (paragraph 4(2)(a))
- ensure that an enhanced criminal record check has been made by the proprietor in respect of any member of staff appointed to a position at the

school and that an enhanced criminal record certificate is obtained before or as soon as is practicable after his/her appointment (paragraph 4(2)(b))

- obtain List 99 checks as appropriate to ensure that no member of staff or volunteer carry out work, or intend to carry out work, at the school in contravention of any direction made under section 142 of the 2002 Act(a) or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction (paragraph 4(2)(d))
- update the single central register of staff so that for each member of staff in post on or after 1 August 2007 the register shows checks made, with dates (and certificates obtained where relevant) of identity, qualifications (where required), whether an enhanced CRB was obtained, or where appropriate, that he/she is not working in contravention of section 142 of the Education Act 2002 (List 99), the right to work in the UK and, where relevant for those who have lived outside the UK, suitability to work in a school (paragraph 4C(2 and 3)).

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

- provide sufficient washrooms for pupils, including facilities for pupils which take account of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(k)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of procedures for handling complaints (standard 7) and must:

- ensure that the procedure provides that correspondence, statements and records of complaints are kept confidential (paragraph 7(k)).

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	Eastcourt Independent School		
DCSF number	317/6055		
Unique reference number	102869		
Type of school	Primary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1896		
Age range of pupils	3-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 157	Girls: 161	Total: 318
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 7	Girls: 13	Total: 20
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,295 - £4,575		
Address of school	1 Eastwood Road Goodmayes Ilford Essex IG3 8UW		
Telephone number	0208590 5472		
Fax number	0208597 8313		
Email address	eastcourtschool@talk21.com		
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Redgrave		
Proprietor	Eastcourt Independent School Limited		
Reporting inspector	Heather Yaxley HMI		
Dates of inspection	5-6 March 2008		