

Our Lady's Preparatory School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	872/6007
Unique Reference Number	110154
Inspection number	320371
Inspection dates	16-17 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton AI

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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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
T 08456 404040

www.ofsted.gov.uk



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

Our Lady's Preparatory School is an independent Catholic school for boys and girls aged from three months to eleven years old. It was founded in 1962. It is held in two large period buildings that have been extended to include additional facilities, in a residential area of Crowthorne. There are 68 children on roll, 23 are of school age; 12 are aged three or four years and receive government funding; 7 attend part-time and 38 children attend the day care setting. The school is registered with Ofsted Children's Directorate to provide day care and holiday care for up to 77 children from birth to under 8 years. The nursery provision was last inspected in 2005 and the holiday care inspected in 2007. The day care provision has not yet been inspected. The day care is open for 51 weeks each year.

The school's aims to '*maximise opportunities for the individual child and to develop self confidence whilst pursuing academic excellence.*'

Evaluation of the school

Our Lady's Preparatory School is a small, friendly school, which succeeds in its aims. It provides a good quality of education and care in a welcoming and warm environment. Pupils make good progress as a result of good teaching using an appropriate curriculum. Pupils in the school and children in the day nursery are well cared for. The school has a long tradition of pupils gaining entry into local independent and grammar schools. Parents are pleased with the efforts the school makes on their children's behalf.

This is the first inspection of the school under s162A of the Education Act 2005 and they meet most of the regulations.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good, sufficiently broad and meets the needs of the pupils. The pupils are taught the subjects of the National Curriculum (NC) with the addition of religious education (RE) and French. School age pupils have weekly swimming with specialist teaching. The school has prepared detailed schemes of work, based on NC guidance, which are effectively used by the staff to plan their lessons. Additional subjects, such as verbal reasoning are taught to prepare pupils for the examinations.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is integrated successfully throughout the curriculum. The Foundation Stage Guidance is effectively used to plan a wide range of interesting activities for pupils in the nursery class. The specialist teacher gives pupils who need additional help good support. A range of curricular visits extends the pupils' knowledge and understanding.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. The staff know the children very well, treat them as individuals and are concerned for their happiness and well-being. The staff plan their lessons effectively and most teach with enthusiasm, this motivates the pupils and helps them develop positive attitudes to learning. The younger pupils following the Foundation Stage curriculum are given a good balance of teacher directed and child initiated activities and make good progress in the stimulating learning environment.

The staff who teach the older pupils have excellent subject knowledge and understanding of the public and entrance examinations for local independent and grammar schools. This ensures that older pupils are very well prepared for them, and most gain a place at the school of their choice. These pupils are now looking forward to the more investigative learning, which they will have the opportunity to do, once the examinations are all over. Staff are confident and use effective questioning in lessons which move at a good pace. Most staff manage the small class sizes well although the dynamic in one small class of five pupils makes for more unsettling behaviour, which if not sufficiently addressed slows the pace of the pupils' learning somewhat. The school is now considering setting up systems to monitor the teaching and learning and share good practice. Resources, including the use of information and communication technology are sufficient and used well to support learning. The staff make detailed notes on pupils' progress and development. A detailed profile of each pupil's progress is kept and parents are well informed through reports and meetings. The school's results in national tests are exceptionally high. Pupils are making good progress.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their good attendance. The school has a very welcoming, warm ethos. Pupils referred to its 'friendly vibe' and stressed that they felt 'part of a big family'. Older pupils look after younger ones and indeed can play with younger pupils without ridicule. Most pupils' behaviour is good in classes and around the school. The oldest pupils develop significant maturity in the way that they talk about the school and their own ambitions, yet at the same time they retain a refreshing childlike innocence and enthusiasm. Attitudes to learning are good. Older pupils are given opportunities to take responsibility and are prepared well for the next stage of their education because the school works hard to develop their personal confidence. Year 6 pupils talked about 'how nervous they were about joining this class because of all the entrance exams' and how effectively the school helped them overcome their nerves and gave them the confidence to do the best

that they can. Pupils are aware of how public institutions and services work and visits outside school support this. They especially enjoy the residential visit to Calshot Activity Centre. Cultural tolerance and harmony are effectively promoted within the school and festivals celebrated when appropriate. Spiritual development is good because this fostering of self-esteem is set within the school's Catholic ethos. There are good links with the local parish and the priest leads a monthly Mass. Pupils described the Catholic ethos as 'embracing' so that non-Catholic pupils feel comfortable within the school.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school makes good provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils. It is a safe place in which to work and learn. The younger children are well cared for in a safe, welcoming and stimulating environment. The school has devised and implemented a range of policies for anti-bullying, health and safety on visits outside school, and safeguarding children. The school is aware of safeguarding issues but the child protection officer has not yet undertaken up-to-date training. The school reacted promptly when told of this omission and the member of staff has been booked onto an appropriate course. Most staff are first aid trained and accidents are carefully recorded. The school is vigilant about fire safety. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthy food and the wholesome school lunches, cooked on the premises, are enjoyed by children of all ages. The extensive grounds and planned physical exercise lessons, including swimming, ensure that pupils have many opportunities for exercise. The admission and attendance registers are kept according to regulations. The school fulfils its duties with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school checks all staff, but has not yet checked all the trustees, to ensure their suitability to work with children. The school holds a single central register of staff checks, to which they now need to add the trustees.

School's premises and accommodation

The school is held in two large detached houses, which have good facilities such as a large hall and provide an effective learning environment. The premises are well maintained and decorated; only small areas are still in need of redecorating. There are attractive, extensive and safe play areas at the side and rear of the school. The school has facilities for pupils who may be ill but there is no wash basin in the room, which is needed to fulfil this regulation.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Parents, carers and others are provided with a good range of clear, up to date information through the prospectus, website, welcome pack and newsletters. The parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were very supportive of the school and confirmed that their children were making good progress and the

school kept them well informed. They made comments such as 'excellent school...the children are very happy... I am thrilled with the nursery.' There are regular consultation meetings between parents and staff and parents have a detailed written report on their child's progress.

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:

- update the child protection policy in line with Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education (2007)* and ensure that all staff are fully trained (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 each member of the governing body has an enhanced CRB check (paragraph 4B(4) and (5))
- include information about checks for trustees 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 a wash basin in the medical room (paragraph 5(l))

School details

Name of school	Our Lady's Preparatory School		
DCSF number	872/6007		
Unique reference number	110154		
Type of school	Catholic Nursery and Preparatory School		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1962		
Age range of pupils	3 months-11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 12	Girls: 11	Total: 23
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 4	Girls: 3	Total: 7
Number of children in day care	Boys: 18	Girls: 20	Total: 38
Number of pupils in receipt of nursery funding	Boys: 6	Girls: 6	Total: 12
Annual fees	£ 5,000- £ 6,600 (school age) £ 2,800- £ 9,600 (full day care)		
Address of school	The Avenue Crowthorne Berkshire RG45 6PB		
Telephone number	01344773394		
Email address	Office@olps.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Helene Robinson		
Proprietor	Trustees of The Church of The Holy Ghost		
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton AI		
Dates of inspection	16-17 January 2008		