

The White House Preparatory School & Woodentops Kindergarten

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	208/6384
Unique Reference Number	100651
Inspection number	320398
Inspection dates	5-6 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Linda Kelsey 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).

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

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

The White House is a privately owned preparatory school which occupies two very different sites. One is privately owned by the proprietors and one is rented from a local tennis club. The school is managed on a day-to-day basis by one of the proprietors and a headteacher, both whom share the teaching in Year 6. The aims of the school are expressed in the school motto which is 'I care and I share'. Average class sizes are small and the adult to pupil ratio is 1:8. The numbers of pupils with English as a second language is 20% which is well above the national average. Pupils are assessed when they start the school, and there are currently no pupils on roll with a statement of special educational need. Two pupils currently are on school action. There are also some children with medical needs. This is the first inspection of the school under section 162A of the Education Act 2005.

Evaluation of the school

The school provides a good quality of education and a good level of support, care and guidance to its pupils. The good curriculum and teaching are appreciated by parents and pupils who respond with outstanding behaviour and attitudes to school life. The school has a strong reputation for good academic achievement and cultural tolerance. The school is well resourced and teachers work hard to meet the needs of all the pupils whatever their background or experience. As a result, pupils make good progress during their time at the school.

Quality of education

The good curriculum offers a broad range of subjects including French and Latin, extra cross-curricular activities, outings, and after-school clubs. Visiting artists and authors regularly come to the school. There is a good programme for personal, social and health education. Visits to places of interest all enhance a good, purposeful and enriching curriculum which also gives opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of citizenship and environmental awareness.

For the youngest pupils, teachers provide an interesting and imaginative programme of activities appropriate for the age and stage of pupils' development. The activities encourage pupils to investigate, be creative and have fun. The agreed areas of learning for children in the Early Years are planned well and are thoughtfully woven

into daily activities so that they learn in a stimulating environment where they are very actively involved in their learning. All children get off to a good start and make good progress.

For the older pupils, aged 5 to 11, a high proportion of time is devoted to numeracy, literacy, sport, art and music. The curriculum is planned for the needs of most pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for pupils to take entrance examinations to popular independent schools in the area. As a result, most pupils make good progress and achieve well. This good provision is enhanced by specialist lessons in English, mathematics for the oldest pupils and in physical education (PE) for all primary age pupils. Regular homework consolidates and develops pupils' learning and pupils readily talked about the value of doing homework either at school or when at home. Pupils' musical talents are enriched in class lessons and, optionally, through paid instrumental tuition in a range of instruments. More limited opportunities are provided for pupils to develop and apply their skills in information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum and this is partly because the ICT suite is currently out of action while new machines are installed. However, pupils spoke about covering part of the curriculum with a higher focus on word processing and text and picture manipulation and less time on enhancing presentation skills and work with information gathering and interpretation. The school recognises this current weakness and ICT is a high priority for future planning.

The quality of teaching overall is good. All members of staff share a clear sense of common purpose and mutual support providing good role models for pupils. Where teaching is good, enthusiastic and well-informed teachers provide lively, innovative and creative lessons which are well planned. In these lessons, there is a good level of challenge. In the best teaching there is a good understanding of pupils' needs and how to involve them in their learning. Most teachers plan lessons carefully in order to build upon pupils' previous knowledge, establishing clear routines and using time well. They make it clear that they expect pupils to listen to instructions carefully. Pupils of all ages concentrate well and work hard. As a result, most pupils of all abilities make good progress. There are high expectations of pupils' behaviour and, as a consequence, pupils behave very responsibly and maturely. However, where lessons rely on too much teacher direction, a 'one method suits all approach' and an abundance of worksheets, learning is less active and this inhibits pupils' progress and independence. One science lesson was weaker because of the lack of individual 'hands on' approach to the use of equipment and more emphasis on watching a demonstration.

Pupils who progress more slowly receive carefully targeted additional support. A well-established programme of regular testing ensures that teachers are able to pinpoint their pupils' relative strengths and weaknesses. However, the school rightly acknowledges that its systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress are in their infancy and remain areas for continued development. Marking is not consistent, or

helpful to pupils about how to improve although, older children know their academic targets.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Personal development and well being is outstanding and, as a result, behaviour is exemplary. The pupils have very good attitudes to work and are a credit to the school and their parents. Attendance is good although the numbers of authorised and unauthorised absences are not recorded consistently in every class. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are taught about the main world religions through their religious studies programme and they visit Jewish, Muslim and Buddhist places of worship. A Muslim parent demonstrated the prayer regime to the pupils and a Punjabi evening was held in the playground one evening and supported by the parents' association. Pupils come from a wide range of different cultural backgrounds and are appreciative of each others' beliefs and cultures.

Pupils experience awe and wonder through their studies of music and their very fine art work which is celebrated around the school. The attitudes of pupils is very good; they are very positive about learning, follow a moral code and take responsibility for each other through their house system and buddy arrangements for new pupils to the school. Pupils get on well together but there are missed opportunities for whole-school events such as a daily act of worship or whole-school breaks at lunchtime and mid morning. Older pupils do not have the opportunity to supervise, work or mix with younger pupils either during lessons or at lunchtime.

Pupils know how to keep healthy and fit. They regularly raise funds for charities both at home and abroad. They take responsibility as house captains; their involvement in representing the school, such as in the choir and gala, develops their personal qualities well and enables them to transfer to future schools confidently. They are well prepared for their future life.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school works hard to ensure all its pupils are safe and well cared for and this aspect is good. Pupils feel safe. There is an extensive array of policies covering health, welfare and safety, although these are not dated to permit ongoing review. Child protection procedures are in place with a designated person. There is a first aid policy and a designated person who administers medicines. All members of staff have recently attended training to update their child protection knowledge and first aid practice. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are adequate and the school takes its responsibility seriously for conducting risk assessments for the sites used, and the personnel employed.

The school provides a well balanced hot meal at lunch-time each day, which all pupils eat with a mixture of opinion and enthusiasm about the diet offered, although

they comment that it is a balanced lunch. They clearly know what constitutes a good diet and regular exercise and know that this will help them maintain a healthy lifestyle. Pupils engage in regular exercise at least four times a week and the provision of the new sports coaching has greatly enhanced this aspect of the curriculum and pupils' well being.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has established suitable procedures for ensuring that, prior to them taking up their responsibilities, all new teaching and non-teaching staff are checked with the appropriate authority to verify their suitability to work with children.

School's premises and accommodation

The majority of pupils are housed in the main building, a converted house on three floors, where most classrooms are of adequate size and suitably furnished and equipped for the number of pupils currently in them. Three rooms have interactive white boards which enhance the delivery of the ICT curriculum. The school's accommodation, particularly the recently constructed kindergarten, is in good condition and provides appropriate facilities for the number and needs of its pupils.

The school has recently undertaken a programme of refurbishment in order to provide dedicated rooms for both art and ICT. The setting up of the newly purchased ICT equipment is imminent. There are appropriate, easily accessible library facilities in each building and very good use is made of local community sports facilities to improve the provision for sport and exercise. All pupils are regularly timetabled for PE at this sports facility which is close to the main school building. The school's main hall is used for whole-school gatherings including, assembly, school meals, talks by visitors and small performances. The school has a suitably equipped medical room.

All pupils, with the exception of children in the kindergarten, have regular access to an all-weather area. The kindergarten benefits from a small paved and terraced area used for playtimes and an adjacent grassed area. There are adequate numbers of washrooms for the numbers of pupils and staff currently at the school.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

A good majority of parents responded positively to the questionnaire stating that they were happy with the school and the information they receive. It includes a vast range of policies which are available to parents through a well maintained web site, the school prospectus and two wide-screen televisions located in the reception area and school hall. These show activities that the pupils have recently engaged in and list the forthcoming events.

Parents have regular meetings with teachers and receive termly progress reports about the academic achievement of their children. The school values parents'

contributions and welcomes them to come and share any concerns they may have. The headteacher meets and greets every pupil each morning as they arrive to start the day, shakes their hand and asks them to acknowledge her and greet her politely. They all do so willingly which helps to develop their politeness, self confidence and self-esteem. Teachers further welcome pupils to their classes at registration. Test scores are included in reports, which draw on standards in the National Curriculum and results of the Year 2 audit. Published results are made available on the web site.

The prospectus contains a list of cross-curricular activities and an outline of the curriculum offered at each key stage including the Early Years and Foundation Stage provision for the Nursery and early Reception classes. Parents receive a welcome pack and guide by the headteacher around the school when they apply for a place for their children.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has suitable policies and procedures for receiving and handling complaints. Parents are informed about these procedures through the school's website or on request. The school has received no formal complaints within the last twelve months.

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 admission register and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 3(9)).

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

- ensure that the children's education is not interrupted by the sharing of premises at the Kindergarten site (paragraph 5(e)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- create more opportunities within lessons for challenging questions and activities without inhibiting the independence in pupils' thinking
- improve marking and the ongoing daily assessment of pupils' work and provide better feedback to the pupils about how they can improve.

School details

Name of school	The White House Preparatory School & Woodentops Kindergarten		
DCSF number	208/6384		
Unique reference number	100651		
Type of school	Primary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1985		
Age range of pupils	3-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 33	Girls: 39	Total: 72
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 15	Girls: 25	Total: 40
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3195-£9570		
Address of school	24 Thornton Road London SW12 0LF		
Telephone number	020 86749514		
Fax number	n/a		
Email address	office@whitehouseschool.com		
Headteacher	Ms L Davies		
Proprietor	Mr Stephen and Mrs Mary McCahery		
Reporting inspector	Linda Kelsey HMI		
Dates of inspection	5-6 February 2008		