

Westward School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	936/6369
Unique Reference Number	125396
Inspection number	320406
Inspection dates	12-13 February 2008
Reporting inspector	John Seal 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).

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

Westward is a preparatory school which caters for 142 boys and girls aged 3 to 11 years. The school is situated in two adjacent houses in Walton-on-Thames in the county of Surrey. The school opened in 1927 on the current site. The buildings have been modernised and extended over recent years. The school's aims are to 'provide children with a thorough grounding, to encourage them to give their best...'. This is the school's first published report by Ofsted although there was an inspection of the Early Years provision in the spring of 2005.

Evaluation of the school

Westward School provides a good quality of education and care. Curricular provision is good and meets the needs of all pupils. The good teaching supports pupils' good progress throughout the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and their behaviour is good. The school provides a good level of care for the pupils and meets all the regulatory requirements.

Quality of education

Curriculum provision is good. Pupils are well served by a broad and balanced curriculum. Lesson planning supports pupils' progression of skills and knowledge. There is good provision for the basic skills in English and mathematics. Older pupils benefit from extended mathematics investigations and there are many examples of pupils' high quality writing and presentation. A real strength of the curriculum is its enrichment through good provision of drama, music and French. There is a good range of extra-curricular provision including swimming, music and sport. Pupils' homework is well linked to activities in school with an effective system of home/school communication books used by staff, pupils and parents. The school provides pupils with regular access to computers for basic information communication and technology (ICT) skills practice. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT research skills in other subjects or use digital and control technology. The school organises interesting and exciting trips which effectively support pupils' learning. Pupils talked excitedly about visiting the Mary Rose, and a museum where they dressed up in historical costumes. In the near future, the school will be visiting the Tutankhamen exhibition.

Teaching and assessment are good. There are well structured and resourced lessons which result in good quality work. The pupils have a real thirst for knowledge and in the best lessons, activities match their needs and challenge them well. Careful and thoughtful questioning by the teacher develops pupils' speaking and listening skills

and encourages them to reflect on their own feelings and thoughts. Marking is regular and highly positive, which contributes to pupils' positive attitudes and self-esteem. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and this is supported by good and consistent use of rewards and sanctions. In the Early Years, there is good deployment of well-qualified teaching assistants. There are good relationships between pupils and pupils and teachers. Teachers are able to give each pupil individual attention to help them develop skills and knowledge because of the small numbers of pupils in each class. As a result, pupils make good progress. This can be seen in the high proportion of pupils who pass their common entrance examinations. The school provides effective specialist teaching in drama and music. The school is ambitious for pupils' achievements in this area and, as a result, all pupils are successful in their London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) examinations. In some lessons there is a need to match the activity to pupils' learning needs more closely, especially for the more able. Although these pupils manage to make good progress, they are hindered by being required to complete the same work as the rest of the class before moving on to more suitably challenging activities.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school prides itself on its 'family atmosphere' and rightly so. Pupils' behaviour is good and their attitudes to each other and the school community are warm and friendly. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is demonstrated by their high attendance rate. Pupils make very good overall progress in developing their personal qualities and know right from wrong. Where given the opportunity, pupils use their initiative extremely well. Pupils have very good awareness and tolerance of other cultures and beliefs. This is because of the school's effective involvement of pupils and their families from different cultures and a well organised programme of celebrations of religious festivals. Pupils' personal, social and emotional development is supported extremely well through the effective use of the school's specialism in drama. As a result, a significant number of pupils are self-confident and have good self-esteem. Pupils are well prepared for their future economic well being through good provision of the basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Pupils make a positive contribution to the community. In Year 6, they are involved in charity fundraising through planning and decision making. The school has a good programme of visits which supports pupils' understanding of public institutions and services in England.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

There is good provision for pupils' welfare health and safety. All the regulations are met. Good child protection and safeguarding procedures and policies are in place and these are reviewed regularly. The school regularly carries out fire drills and the details are logged. Staff are well trained in first aid. Risk assessments are carried out efficiently for school trips and off site activities. The school takes good precautions to ensure pupils' health and safety both in the school and on school trips. A good example of this is the first aid and emergency packs which are placed by the playground and the portable emergency packs for staff to take off site. Pupils feel

safe and know who to go to if they are worried. Bullying is rare and the school has thorough procedures in place to follow up and resolve problems. As a parent said, 'at the tiniest sign, it is dealt with effectively'.

The school encourages pupils to be aware of living a healthy lifestyle, for instance, there is a good take up for the fruit sold at break times. Pupils are encouraged to be physically active and there are regular opportunities to take part in sporting activities both at school and during the weekly visits to the local leisure centre. The school meets the requirements in respect of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school checks all staff appropriately to ensure their suitability to work with children, and keeps a single central register of staff as required.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation enable pupils to feel and be safe and to progress with their learning effectively. The school has used the space available well to provide good learning environments. The site is developed well for the younger children. There is appropriate use of space for pupils to play and learn.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides clear, accurate, up to date information for parents, prospective parents and others in the prospectus. Parents receive suitable written reports about their children's progress as well as through a range of formal and informal meetings. A very high proportion of parents are pleased with the school although some wished for more information on their children's progress.

Procedures for handling complaints

There is an effective policy and set of procedures in place which fully meet regulations.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

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:

- Improve the use of assessment in lessons to match tasks closely to all pupils' learning needs.

- Improve the provision of information and communication technology for all pupils.

Inspection of funded nursery education

Effectiveness of the funded nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good and for some rapid progress towards the early learning goals. The enthusiastic staff team have a clear understanding of the Foundation Stage and support all the children's learning well. Staff complete assessment records to inform them about children's starting points. They continue to monitor children's achievements regularly. Staff use this information to plan the next steps in children's learning.

Staff plan a broad range of activities and experiences around themes, stimulating children's progress in all areas of learning. The 'outside' classroom is an exciting and excellent resource. For example, children use their imagination as chairs and benches become an aeroplane. They negotiate who will be the pilot and choose their destination. Others skilfully manoeuvre a trolley to 'serve refreshments'; others write the tickets. Children wait eagerly in line for their turn outside.

Children receive regular individual support with their learning to promote identified areas, such as number work and reading. Children receive praise for their efforts; staff then reinforce the learning. All children benefit including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and with English as an additional language. Staff work closely with other professionals to provide an inclusive curriculum.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children behave extremely well, are happy and motivated. Children are selected each day to be helpers. They respond well to this role, which promotes their confidence

Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good. This ensures ongoing progress across the unit. Since the last inspection, there have been significant improvements for outside play and snack time. The head of early years effectively monitors and evaluates the curriculum. Staff are fully supported in their roles and ongoing development. Partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents receive information about the curriculum as children enter nursery and then further information for the Kindergarten. Parents share their knowledge with the children for example, the Nigerian harvest. Parents are pleased with the setting; however, some expressed a wish for further opportunities to be involved in the children's learning. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

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Recommendations or actions to improve the funded nursery
education

To improve the quality and standards of the nursery education the registered person should take account of the following recommendations:

further develop opportunities for parents to become fully involved in their child's learning.

School details

Name of school	Westward School		
DCSF number	936/6369		
Unique reference number	125396		
Unique reference number (funded nursery education)	523687		
Type of school	Preparatory		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1927		
Age range of pupils	3-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 81	Girls: 61	Total: 142
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 11	Girls: 11	Total: 22
Number of children receiving funded nursery education	Boys: 12	Girls: 25	Total: 37
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4110-£5085		
Address of school	47 Hersham Road		
	Walton-on-Thames		
	Surrey		
	KT12 1LE		
Telephone number	01932220911		
Fax number	01932220911		
Email address	westwardschool@btconnect.com		
Headteacher	Mrs P Robertson		
Proprietor	Mr and Mrs Townley		
Reporting inspector	John Seal HMI		
Childcare inspector	Wendy Ratcliff		
Dates of inspection	12-13 February 2008		