

Hopelands School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	916/6051
Unique Reference Number	115805
Inspection number	322070
Inspection dates	12–13 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Jonathan Palk 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).

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

Hopelands School is a small, non-selective, independent preparatory school for pupils aged three to 11. It was founded in 1954 and registered as a company on 4 April 1991. At the time of the inspection there were 77 pupils on roll. A small number of children in the Nursery attend part-time. The school is oversubscribed and has reached the capacity of its building. There are five mixed-aged classes. Fifteen per cent have learning difficulties although none has a statement of special educational needs. The aims of Hopelands School are to provide a well-rounded education, based on a Christian ethos, where the holistic well-being of each child is paramount.

Evaluation of the school

Hopelands School successfully meets its aims. It provides a good quality of education for its pupils and ensures they have very good attitudes to learning. Pupils reach standards that exceed expectations and they make good progress. There is good provision for pupils' pastoral needs and for those who need additional support. They are confident and make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The curriculum is good overall. There are particular strengths in the promotion of pupils' personal development and in the provision for curriculum enrichment. The school has made good progress since its last inspection in September 2005 and now meets all the regulations. The headteacher knows the school well and the school's self-evaluation is accurate. The school is well placed to improve.

Quality of education

The quality of education is good. The curriculum is good. The school teaches all the subjects of the National Curriculum and national guidance is used effectively to ensure that pupils progress well as they move through the school. There is good guidance to support teachers with a strong steer given to learning by specialist teaching, particularly in Key Stage 2. There is little unnecessary repetition of work in the mixed-age and mixed-ability classes. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory. Pupils develop sufficient competence in preparation for the next phase of their education but there are gaps in their experience of control technology and working with databases that limits what the pupils can achieve. There is good provision for pupils to develop English skills across

the curriculum, particularly in science, history and geography. This leads to very good progress in pupils learning to write well for a range of purposes. Investigative science teaching is practical and the engaging topics in history and geography serve to motivate and enthuse learners. They also make a good contribution to the pupils' understanding of other cultures. Art, physical education (PE), drama and music are given a high priority in the curriculum and make a significant contribution to the pupils' personal development.

Children in the Reception class have a programme of activities appropriate to their age and ability. The classroom is attractive and there is a reasonable balance of teacher-led and child-initiated activity. There is a good emphasis on practical activities for the Nursery children that are well supported by adults. The activities help the youngest children to quickly develop confidence in their spoken language. There is a strong focus on developing early reading and writing skills and knowledge of number in the Reception year. The planning for creative development and knowledge and understanding does not take sufficient account of the children's good independent skills. Whilst the outdoor area is suitable, there are limitations posed by its dual use as a playground. Information gathered from assessments is used to check on progress but is not sufficiently linked to planned activities.

Some very good provision is made for personal, social and health education, for PE and the creative and expressive arts. Pupils play a good range of sports. There is a regular swimming programme and, for a small school, excellent opportunity for pupils to participate in competitive sport. This contributes significantly to their excellent social and personal development as well as ensuring a positive approach to being healthy. Pupils are all involved in performances at various points in the year and acquire an impressive range of skills in painting and three-dimensional art. Provision for class music is good and this is well supported by those pupils who receive specialist teaching. All pupils learn to perform together regularly and there is evident enjoyment for this activity by the pupils. The curriculum is further enhanced by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities to which all but a few commit.

Overall, teaching and assessment is satisfactory. Specialist teaching contributes to pupils' overall good learning. Lessons are carefully planned and delivered at a brisk pace. There are good strategies for managing and organising learning so that those with learning difficulties progress well. There is a good range of different activities during each lesson that motivate and encourage pupils to learn well. A strong emphasis is given to learning practically through, for example, science and design and technology. The accurate match of work to different abilities was less consistent in the lessons observed. Sometimes this resulted in work that was too hard and confused pupils, or too easy and the pupils coasted. There is better use of questioning to challenge pupils and to ensure every pupil contributes. Assessments of pupils' standards are thorough in all subjects, although the information gained is not yet used consistently when grouping the class. The marking is of variable quality in its ability to inform the pupils what they need to do next.

The school now has a good system for tracking pupil progress. It employs the results of optional national reading, writing and mathematics tests and is supported by the school's own internal testing. The school has a good view of national benchmarks and the information gathered allows them to track individual progress and measure standards reached. This information is used well to target those pupils who are risk of falling behind. By all measures, pupils make good progress. All the pupils who left last year exceeded national expectations in English, mathematics and science and this year there is a similar picture.

Relationships between pupils and their teachers are very good. Teachers use praise well to ensure that pupils achieve as much as they can. Good support is provided to those who need a little extra help and those with additional learning needs. An expanding programme of additional lessons for able and talented youngsters is helping to address their needs.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The school makes good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is a strong Christian ethos that pervades assemblies and this combines well with the regular programme of teaching about other faiths. School assemblies have a strong spiritual and moral message. Adequate provision is made for pupils' cultural development. All pupils are tolerant and accepting of others. The school makes good use of visitors, for example, from Africa to delve deeper into cultural elements of life. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and their attendance is excellent. Their behaviour is outstanding; they are polite and communicate confidently with adults and with each other. Pupils carry out responsibilities within the school including that of school council. They have contributed to improvements relating to the health and safety of fellow pupils, including working with the lunchtime supervisors on improving the timetable for use of lunchtime equipment. Pupils are involved in fund raising and regularly entertain members of the local community with musical and drama shows. The school ensures that pupils are well prepared for their future lives.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. The school has rectified all the outstanding health and safety issues raised in the last inspection report. The school moved quickly to improve access to the premises and now meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002. A new building provides good access to a hall and a classroom. There is still a difficulty for pupils who need to access the second floor of the main school building. All policies to secure the welfare and care of pupils are in place and the school successfully promotes anti-bullying, friendship and caring for others. There is a designated child protection officer and there are good systems to ensure pupils feel safe. The pupils told inspectors they feel safe and well cared for. As one pupil put it, 'It is like a family'. The school does a

great deal to promote healthy lifestyles through regular daily exercise, two hours of PE lessons a week and swimming. Very nearly all pupils take up at least one sports club. The school has worked hard to encourage healthy eating and suggestions have been made as to how to improve the content of packed lunches. Some of the younger pupils thought teachers could be stricter in making 'children eat the right food'. Those joining the school are very well supported, ensuring they settle in quickly.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has carried out the necessary safeguarding checks for all staff and recorded these in a single, central register.

School's premises and accommodation

The accommodation is satisfactory. The building is clean and well managed. The display of high quality art work is particularly inviting. Good use is made of the recently built school hall for PE, music, dance and drama. There are sufficient computers shared around the classes to support learning. These are connected to the Internet and are used well to develop pupils' research and presentational skills. Overall, and across the school, resources to support learning are adequate. The small classrooms mean that pupils find it difficult to get to them during lessons. The school is aware of this limitation and plans are well advanced to increase the size of classrooms.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Parents are provided with a good range of information. There is an easy-to-use website that provides most of the information to parents and prospective parents. This has formed the basis of a fast and cost-efficient means of keeping parents up-to-date. The parents' induction pack contains all of the required information and parents can view other documents on request. Parents receive a good quality report on their child's progress. The reports are clear about achievements and use straightforward language. There is some variation in the precision of targets set and this is recognised by the school as an area for further improvement.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a clearly written complaints procedure which complies with all of the regulations. Any complaints that are made are dealt with effectively and the outcomes are recorded and distributed to all parties concerned. The school acts on the recommendations made. All parents are aware of the complaints procedure.

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 point for development:

- use assessment information more effectively when planning activities for groups of pupils in lessons.

School details

Name of school	Hopelands School		
DCSF number	9166051		
Unique reference number	115805		
Type of school	Preparatory		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1954		
Age range of pupils	3-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 15	Girls: 52	Total: 71
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 1	Girls: 5	Total: 6
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,479 - £5,322		
Address of school	38 Regent Street Stonehouse Gloucestershire GL10 2AD		
Telephone number	01453 822164		
Fax number	01453 827288		
Email address	enquiries@hopelands.org.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Sheila Bradburn		
Proprietor	Hopelands Preparatory School		
Reporting inspector	Jonathan Palk HMI		
Dates of inspection	12–13 June 2008		