

The Viking School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	925/6033
Unique Reference Number	120739
Inspection number	329414
Inspection dates	15 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Roger Fry

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.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focussed principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

The Viking School opened in Skegness in 1964, as an independent preparatory school for pupils aged from 3 to 11 years. There are currently 107 pupils and young children on roll. The school's mission is to provide a *'broad curriculum to a high standard... (and to)... ensure children have the best opportunities to realise their full potential...'* The school prepares pupils for entrance examinations to grammar schools at age 11. The school provides an Early Years Foundation Stage for three to five year-olds, which was inspected together with the main school. The school was last inspected in 2004 and the Early Years provision was inspected in June 2008 by the Children's Directorate of Ofsted.

Evaluation of the school

The Viking School provides a good quality of education in the main school and in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils and young children make good progress because the teaching, assessment and curriculum are effective. The school cares well for pupils and they enjoy school very much. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and the school achieves its key aim of preparing pupils for grammar school education most effectively. The school again meets all of the regulations.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. It meets the needs and aspirations of pupils and young children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and supports them in making good progress in lessons. The school provides an education based on the National Curriculum from age five. Extensive curriculum policies and a range of guidance documentation and termly plans provide effective support for teachers' daily planning.

The curriculum provides pupils with coherent experiences in all National Curriculum subjects and they have appropriate access to computers. Support for the minority of pupils who have additional learning needs is good. The small class sizes and detailed knowledge that adults have of pupils' academic and pastoral needs mean that they make good progress. Planning to meet the curricular needs of pupils involves parents, teachers and pupils and aims initially to build pupils' self-confidence.

The teaching and assessment of pupils' progress are good throughout the school and it has maintained the high standards found at the last inspection. Most lessons move at a brisk pace and teachers plan their lessons in detail, following the helpful agreed format for lesson plans. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and are enthusiastic about their teaching, which rubs off on pupils. They take time to respond positively to objects and ideas pupils bring to school, which pupils enjoy. Pupils have confidence in their teachers, listen closely to what they are told and respond enthusiastically. The school is an orderly community because relationships are excellent. Pupils make the most of what they are offered and enjoy lessons very much.

The majority of the planned activities observed in lessons were intended for all pupils in the mixed ability classes. This approach worked well when pupils had opportunities to use their own ideas, such as in English lessons. Pupils in Year 6 responded very well indeed to the recorded sound effects their teacher provided, which, unknown to pupils until later, were the start of a series of lessons about Macbeth. In a minority of mathematics lessons, pupils' progress slowed because the work was not matched well enough to their abilities. Some pupils found the work too hard and others too easy. Too little apparatus was provided for pupils to use, for example, to help them work out all the combinations of pairs of numbers that add up to 18. For the small number of pupils who find learning difficult, the school provides well for them, offering work that matches their abilities and other needs. Resources generally are adequate and are used effectively to promote learning.

Teachers have a good knowledge of the standards that pupils reach over the year and of the progress they make. Each pupil has a 'curriculum file', in which key knowledge and skills are ticked off when pupils have understood something new. This approach is used for every subject. Adults gather this information effectively to ensure that pupils' standards and progress are maintained and that no pupil falls behind. Pupils know how they are getting on and have a clear knowledge of what they have to achieve to move on to the next stage of their learning. Teachers often mark pupils' work with them alongside and much good advice and explanation is given at these times. Teachers regularly give pupils guidance about how they could improve their work.

Pupils and young children make rapid progress because of the good curriculum, teaching and assessment of pupils' standards and progress. In the last five years virtually all pupils have reached the standards necessary for entry to grammar

schools. Regular tests and other assessments of pupils' knowledge and skills show that they achieve significantly better than pupils of similar age. In the lessons inspected, pupils typically made good progress.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' and young children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding overall. Pupils' rapid personal development, such as listening actively to others, begins in the Early Years Foundation Stage and goes from strength to strength as they grow older. Attendance is high and many pupils said how much they love school in their questionnaires. Typical of pupils' responses was, 'It is fun at this school and I have good friends.'

Relationships throughout the school are very strong. Adults set a very good example in all matters, which sets the positive tone. Pupils' behaviour in school and their attitudes to work are outstanding. There is a very calm but purposeful atmosphere in classes. Pupils participate fully in lessons and know when to ask for extra help. Pupils from all backgrounds participate equally well in all the school offers. Pupils and staff show considerable respect for all views and opinions. All pupils form positive relationships with their schoolmates in an atmosphere of tolerance, respect and harmony.

There is a great sense of purpose amongst pupils. They know they need to work hard to achieve the goal of going to their school of choice. The school prepares them very well for this challenge by concentrating on the key academic and social skills they will need in the future, including those necessary to ensure their economic well-being.

Pupils enjoy contributing in many ways to the school and wider community and they are encouraged by adults to do so. They know it is right to help those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils also help with a wide range of duties in school, such as by organising events and as house captains. Pupils learn about how decisions are made locally and nationally as part of their work on citizenship.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The school makes good provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety overall and the provision is outstanding in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school takes all reasonable steps to ensure that pupils and young children remain safe whilst at school. The school has written essential policies and made suitable physical risk assessments. It therefore has good procedures to deal with a wide variety of potential incidents.

Procedures for recruiting staff and safeguarding everyone meet the current regulations. An accurate single central record of checks on staff suitability is in place. Staff receive relevant training, such as in child protection, first aid procedures and

fire safety. The school has a proper awareness of its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and has made helpful changes to the building.

Regular physical education and swimming lessons, and close attention to healthy eating and drinking contribute effectively to pupils' healthy lifestyles. Pupils gain a good understanding about what a healthy lifestyle is in lessons. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe and avoid unnecessary dangers.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a good start in the pre-school and Reception classes. They enter the pre-school in the term that they are three years old. Teachers and teaching assistants have a good understanding that young children learn best when they feel happy and secure. They are very skilled at valuing each child and their ideas. This means that children quickly forge trusting relationships with adults and are quickly ready to learn. It is unsurprising that in this highly nurturing environment one four year-old wrote, 'Our teachers love us'.

Policy and practice to support children's good health and welfare are exceptionally thorough. The manager of pre-school provision is well informed about the latest curriculum requirements. She has successfully led new staff and curriculum developments to give children greater freedom of movement between classes and the outside learning area. This means that pre-school children benefit from a good variety of activities, including those that allow them to explore ideas independently. Similar plans for the Reception class are in place but practice is not as well developed. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection in ensuring that observations of children are undertaken far more frequently and a good new system for recording these is in place. This process has helped staff to make good progress in identifying opportunities for mathematical learning in everyday situations.

Teaching is effective and children make good progress from their starting points. Adults set an extremely good example to children of how to behave and communicate, which helps them to make rapid progress in their personal development. Expectations of what children can achieve are high but adults are skilled at enabling children to think without exerting undue pressure. This is well organised, effective and improving provision in which children flourish.

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 match of work to pupils' abilities and the use of apparatus in mathematics
- embed the provision of more independent and outdoor work for children in the Reception class.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?		✓		
How well do children achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage relative to their starting points and capabilities?		✓		
How good are the personal development and well-being of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?		✓		
What is the quality of welfare, health and safety of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	✓			
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?		✓		
What is the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage including, where relevant, the quality of childcare?		✓		

School details

Name of school	The Viking School		
DCSF number	925/6033		
Unique reference number	120739		
EY URN	EY 512295		
Type of school	Preparatory		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1964		
Age range of pupils	3–11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 34	Girls: 42	Total: 76
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 14	Girls: 17	Total: 31
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,831		
Address of school	140 Church Road North Skegness Lincolnshire PE25 2QJ		
Telephone number	01754 765749		
Fax number	01754 765749		
Email address	sandra@viking140.fsnet.co.uk		
Headteacher	Miss Laura Middlebrook		
Proprietor	Mrs Sandra Barker		
Reporting inspector	Roger Fry		
Dates of inspection	15 September 2008		