

# Handel House Preparatory School

Independent School

Inspection report

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|--|------------------|
| DCSF Registration Number                     | 925/6023         |
| Unique Reference Number                      | 120733           |
| URN for registered childcare and social care | EY338252         |
| Inspection number                            | 329432           |
| Inspection dates                             | 7–8 October 2008 |
| Reporting inspector                          | Godfrey Bancroft |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended. The inspection of childcare was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.

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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, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The inspection of registered provision<sup>1</sup> was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.

## Information about the school

Handel House is a small co-educational, non-denominational preparatory school which admits pupils aged from 2 to 11 years. It is situated in the market town of Gainsborough, in Lincolnshire. In addition to Gainsborough, pupils come from villages in the area and from Lincoln, Scunthorpe and north Nottinghamshire. Records indicate that there has been a school on the site since the 1850s. The school aims to: encourage a love of learning, encourage personal, social and academic achievement and encourage a responsibility to and for each other. The last inspection was in May 2005.

## Evaluation of the school

Handel House Preparatory School is a good school that meets its stated aims successfully. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is also good. The care of pupils and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are exceptional. Consequently, teaching is good and pupils make good progress, both academically and socially. The school has worked effectively to address the issues for improvement identified by the last inspection. It meets all the regulations for registration both as an independent school and as a provider for the EYFS.

## Quality of education

The curriculum is good. It meets pupils' learning needs well and is matched closely to their age and the stage reached in their education. There is a strong focus on English and mathematics and, for younger children on the development of their communication skills, often through speech and drama. Other subjects are by no means neglected; for example, art and music have a high profile and this is reflected in the quality of pupils' work. In addition all children in Years 1 to 6 are taught

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<sup>1</sup> Schools which provide childcare for children from birth until the term in which they reach their third birthday must register this provision separately with Ofsted.

French and those in Years 3 to 6 are also taught German. Since the time of the last inspection a more structured approach to teaching personal, social and health education has been introduced, helping to overcome a previously identified weakness. This programme also helps pupils to have an insight into their own community and the wider world. Given its relatively small size the school also offers an exceptional range of additional, after-school activities. These include drama, Spanish and an information and communication technology (ICT) club.

Teaching and assessment are good and result in pupils making good progress. Older pupils are currently taught in mixed-age classes. Through good planning, teachers manage this well, ensuring that work is matched closely to pupils' individual abilities and needs. Teachers' specialist subject knowledge also contributes effectively to pupils' learning and progress, for example in music and physical education (PE). Pupils' work is marked regularly. Marking celebrates pupils' efforts and provides them with encouragement to do well. However, it does not always give enough attention to identifying the possible next steps in pupils' learning. Very positive relationships between teachers and pupils make a significant contribution to pupils becoming confident learners. The good development of pupils' speaking and listening skills helps to lay the foundation for the progress they make. Occasionally, opportunities to challenge pupils with open ended questions which have the potential to extend their thinking are not taken.

Arrangements to assess pupils' progress are thorough and well organised. From the early stages pupils' progress in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are monitored closely and their subsequent development is planned with care. As pupils become older their progress is measured accurately against national standards through careful use of standard assessment tasks and tests.

Each year the school undertakes the national tests in English, mathematics and science for pupils in Year 6. Test results are externally validated and over the last four years standards have been above average. The work in pupils' books and that seen during lessons shows that this remains the case for those who are currently attending, giving a clear indication of the good progress they make. The majority of pupils also take the 11-plus examination and go on to attend the local grammar school. The school is justifiably proud of its achievements in this respect. In recent years the school has experienced a 100% pass rate. There is also compelling evidence to show that pupils who join the school when they are part way through their primary education often make exceptional progress from their starting points.

## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils attend regularly and clearly enjoy their education. Their responses to the pupils' inspection questionnaire show that they have no significant concerns and are very pleased with the quality of education and the care they receive. One pupil said 'We have a little school, so we can all have our say and get the attention we need.'

Teachers have high expectations of how pupils will respond and as a result their behaviour is outstanding. Children are courteous, well-mannered and appropriately confident in the way they relate to each other and to adults. Almost without exception pupils apply themselves well and work hard. They sustain their efforts independently and support each other readily when working in groups. They are also eager to be helpful and to take responsibility. Pupils make an exceptional contribution to their community and to the wider world in caring for each other and in raising money for charities. For example, they prepare 'shoeboxes' of gifts for the Samaritans Purse charity, to send to children in other parts of the world who are less fortunate. The school also provides pupils with a good range of opportunities to become increasingly aware of other beliefs and cultures. Pupils' outstanding spiritual development was illustrated vividly during the school's excellent harvest festival, when pupils' singing, music making and public speaking were all exceptional.

The good academic progress that pupils make, coupled with their well-developed social skills ensures that they are well equipped for the future and for the next stages of their education.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. A full set of robust policies is in place to underpin pupils' welfare, health and safety. The school checks regularly to ensure that any areas of potential risk in terms of pupils' safety, the safety of the building and the equipment pupils use is minimised. For example, fire safety regulations are met in full and there is good cover for the administration of first aid. Arrangements to ensure child protection are fully up-to-date. These arrangements work well in the eyes of the pupils. As one commented, 'The staff and teachers are really friendly and always help us sort out our problems'. Pupils recognise the importance of taking regular exercise and of eating healthily, because the school raises their awareness. However, the content of some of the snacks and packed lunches that pupils bring from home does not always back up the school's best efforts. The school fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All the regulations and checks to ensure that the proprietor and staff are suitable people to work with young children are met in full. A single central register of these is maintained as required.

## School's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are satisfactory. They are maintained in a clean condition and in a good state of decoration. Some of the classrooms are small, but they are adequate for the number of pupils currently in each class. A dedicated computer suite is used effectively, enabling pupils to make good progress in ICT. A suitable outdoor area allows pupils to play and socialise at breaks. However, there is no dedicated area for indoor PE. The school overcomes this situation by making use of use of other facilities, such as the local leisure centre for teaching swimming. Since the time of last inspection the boys' toilets, which were judged to be inadequate, have been fully renovated.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school's policies and practice meet the regulations in full. A significant number of parents and carers returned the inspection questionnaire. Their responses were universally positive, with many expressing their appreciation for the quality of education the school provides. One parent reflected the views of many when she said, 'My child thoroughly enjoys school and looks forward to going each morning'.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school's policies and practice meet the regulations in full. In the recent past there have been no complaints from parents about any aspect of the school's work.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of EYFS provision is good. Children in the Kindergarten, Nursery and pre-Nursery have good opportunities for learning and developing. They benefit from an interesting range of activities and make good use of both the inside and outside learning environments. The atmosphere is calm and caring and relationships between adults and children are excellent; consequently, children feel safe and secure. They enjoy their learning and behave very well. Children show a good awareness of safety. They move around carefully and use equipment, for example scissors, sensibly. An appropriate balance of activities initiated by adults and by the children themselves means that pupils quickly gain confidence and become

independent learners. In the pre-Nursery, children soon develop good social skills which enable them to work together cooperatively and share resources. Children make good progress across all the areas of learning, particularly in their development of language, literacy and number skills. Planning indicates an appropriate range of activities, which makes learning enjoyable. Teachers know their children well and generally ensure they are sufficiently challenged, although what children are expected to learn in the various activities is not always evident in their written plans. Diversity is valued and pupils have the chance to learn about other cultures, for example through their visit to a Sikh temple and their Chinese New Year celebrations. Assessment procedures are very thorough and are used consistently in all three classes. Frequent photographs and accompanying comments by teachers build up a very helpful record of each child's achievements. Children with additional learning needs are provided for effectively. Whilst the monitoring of provision is mainly informal, the school is aware of areas of assessment that would benefit from further development and is working on these. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and the recently introduced requirement to provide children with key workers is already in place.

## 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 regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- the more effective use of marking to explain the next steps in learning to pupils
- the refinement of planning for EYFS classes so that it is clear what children are expected to learn from each activity they experience.

## Inspection Judgement Recording Form

| outstanding | good | satisfactory | inadequate |
|-------------|------|--------------|------------|
|-------------|------|--------------|------------|

### The quality of education

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

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

|  |   |  |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | x |  |  |  |
| The behaviour of pupils  | x |  |  |  |

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

|  |   |  |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils | x |  |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|--|

### The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

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



## School details

|   |   |           |           |
|---|---|-----------|-----------|
| Name of school  | Handel House Preparatory School                           |           |           |
| DCSF number   | 925/6023  |           |           |
| Unique reference number                                       | 120733  |           |           |
| EY URN (for registered childcare only)                        | EY338252  |           |           |
| Type of school  | Preparatory   |           |           |
| Status  | Independent   |           |           |
| Date school opened  | 1850  |           |           |
| Age range of pupils   | 2–11  |           |           |
| Gender of pupils  | Mixed   |           |           |
| Number on roll (full-time pupils)                             | Boys: 16  | Girls: 16 | Total: 32 |
| Number on roll (part-time pupils)                             | Boys: 10  | Girls: 6  | Total: 16 |
| Number of pupils aged 0-3 in registered childcare provision   | Boys: 7   | Girls: 5  | Total: 12 |
| Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need | Boys: 0   | Girls: 0  | Total: 0  |
| Annual fees (day pupils)                                      | £2,835–£3,075   |           |           |
| Annual fees (childcare)                                       | £860 (with the option to pay per session)                 |           |           |
| Address of school   | The Northolme<br>Gainsborough<br>Lincolnshire<br>DN21 2JB |           |           |
| Telephone number  | 01427 612426  |           |           |
| Fax number  | 01427 612426  |           |           |
| Email address   | handelhouseschoolheadteacher@btinternet.com               |           |           |
| Headteacher   | Mrs V C Haigh   |           |           |
| Proprietor  | Mr B Haigh and Mrs V C Haigh                              |           |           |
| Reporting inspector   | Godfrey Bancroft  |           |           |
| Dates of inspection   | 7–8 October 2008  |           |           |