

Downsend School - Epsom Lodge

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	936/6199
Unique Reference Number	125378
URN for registered childcare and social care	EY307658
Inspection number	329577
Inspection dates	16 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Anne Duffy 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). 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 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.

The inspection of registered provision¹ was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focused 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

Downsend School - Epsom Lodge is a non-selective pre-preparatory school for boys and girls aged from two to six years. Located in the residential area of Epsom in Surrey, it is part of the Downsend group of four schools and has been owned by Cognita Schools Ltd since 2004. The school aims to create a rich, colourful and stimulating environment where a child can experience success and develop a love of learning and the enthusiasm to learn more. There are extensive and attractive grounds which have recently been enhanced with help from the parents' association.

Children can start school from the age of two, moving through two pre-school year groups (1st and 2nd Steps Nursery) to Reception and Year 1. Most transfer to Downsend Preparatory School at the start of Year 2 although some move to state schools after the pre-school years. A small minority enter with English as an additional language (EAL) or with learning difficulties or disabilities. There is an 'early bird' facility for all children from 08.00 until 08.30 and an extended day facility from 16.00 until 17.30.

The school was last inspected in 2005. The current headteacher joined the school in September 2008. At the time of the inspection there were 121 on roll.

Evaluation of the school

Epsom Lodge provides a good quality of education and care. Predominantly catering for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), it provides a good curriculum which meets the needs of its children; children are well motivated and

¹ 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.

make good progress. Teaching and assessment are good overall with some outstanding teaching. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and their behaviour is outstanding. The caring ethos and family atmosphere within the school are reflected in the good procedures for the welfare, health and safety. Since the last inspection the school has addressed suggested points for development by reviewing and minimising its use of worksheets and introducing the use of learning targets. The school has worked well to respond to the new requirements of the EYFS framework in a timely and appropriate manner and EYFS provision is good. The school meets all regulatory requirements.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good overall. The school aims to 'present a broad and balanced curriculum in which all children have opportunities to succeed as individuals' and in this it succeeds well. Its further aim, 'to extend all children and, at the same time, provide necessary support for those with special needs', is less securely embedded. Whilst teacher knowledge and understanding meets needs appropriately at an individual level, the school has yet to develop a comprehensive whole school approach for teaching children with English as an additional language or those with additional learning needs.

In the EYFS, children make good progress because there is a rich range of activities which are well planned and teaching is good.

At Key Stage 1 children are taught a wide range of subjects; curriculum policies are reviewed regularly and appropriately supported by long, medium and short term planning. Basic skills are developed well and links between subjects are effectively supported by a topic based approach. Careful display of children's work is evident throughout the school and presents children with a rich and stimulating, although occasionally over-busy, environment. Provision for music and dance is strong and the teaching of French throughout the school adds to children's achievements. A good feature of the provision is the number of visitors and the wide range of educational visits. These add immensely to children's enjoyment of their education and help to bring the curriculum to life. Lunchtime and after-school clubs further enrich the curriculum, developing skills such as independent self-help and co-operation. This is evident even in the very early opportunities provided by the school for pre-school toddlers.

Teaching and assessment are good. Monitoring of teaching and learning to date has not made a clear enough link between teaching and learning outcomes but the school, as part of the Cognita group, has appropriate plans to address this. Children are keen to learn and generally make good, and occasionally outstanding, progress. Relationships between staff and children are strong and, as a result, children are very responsive to instructions, confident to ask and answer questions and offer their views. Behaviour in lessons is excellent and lessons for older children keep a brisk pace. Class teachers have good curricular knowledge, they plan lessons carefully and teaching assistants are generally deployed effectively. Occasionally, teaching assistance is used to support individual children to remain on task. However,

activities which are better matched to their individual needs may render support less necessary. There is no agreed programme in place to enable staff to be secure about the progress of individual children who may be at the early stages of learning English. However, teachers know their children well, have high expectations and encourage them to work hard. Work is consistently marked and good use is now being made of individual learning targets for literacy and numeracy. The school recognises that it does not yet have a comprehensive system that enables it to systematically track and monitor children's progress over time or clearly identify, for example, the reasons for differences in achievement between reading and mathematics.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about how much their children enjoy school, for example saying, 'He has loved school since his first day'. This enjoyment is evident from the very beginning of children's time in EYFS. In addition, it can also be seen in their very good attendance, attitudes to learning, and in the way they respond to staff and to each other. Children know the difference between right and wrong and behaviour around the school is outstanding, reflecting the school's harmonious atmosphere. They make a positive contribution to their own community and there are appropriate plans to develop a school council. From an early age children learn to take responsibility for the resources which they use in class and at play. They demonstrate an increasing ability to share these and to negotiate. The school supports the key skills of literacy and numeracy effectively and children become confident emergent users of information technology, developing skills which in the long term will support their future economic well-being. Children benefit well from opportunities to extend their knowledge and awareness of public services and institutions through the extensive range of visits, visitors and experiences provided by the school. Their awareness and understanding of different lifestyles and cultures is, however, less thoroughly promoted and established.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The school makes good provision for ensuring the welfare, health and safety of the children. Sufficient staff are trained in first aid and the arrangements for fire and other emergencies are secure. Appropriate safeguarding arrangements and risk assessments are in place and children feel safe in and around school. At times, however, they are required to tolerate somewhat cramped learning conditions. The attractive grounds and play areas, plus good playtime resources, promote active lifestyles effectively and children demonstrate a good early awareness of healthy eating. There is an appropriate plan in place which demonstrates how the school intends to improve facilities for adults and children with disabilities.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality and standards of the education for children aged two to five in EYFS are good. Children are helped to learn and develop well. They enjoy a range and variety of play opportunities and learning experiences. The curriculum is good and is well planned, successfully incorporating all six areas of learning. There are good opportunities for children to make choices in their activities and work cooperatively with one another, developing their skills in speaking and listening. Children are reading well within, and some above, their chronological age. They are taught to form letters and numbers correctly and this provides them with a firm basis to further develop their handwriting skills. They demonstrate that they are beginning to confidently recognise and write numerals, as well as sequence and compare numbers.

Children benefit from the close partnership between parents and staff. They achieve well due to good adult support and the well organised learning opportunities and resources. These help to provide a good range of indoor adult-directed as well as child-initiated activities and increasing use is being made of the outdoor learning environment.

The quality of welfare, health and safety of children in the EYFS is good. Although some opportunities are missed to promote an early awareness of other cultures and lifestyles, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is nurtured very well. Both at the 'early birds' sessions and within school, they have a strong sense of belonging and behave extremely well for their age. Children demonstrate that they are beginning to understand their feelings and are responsive to those of others. They take increasing responsibility for their own belongings and work and play very well together. As a result, their personal development and well-being are outstanding.

The leadership and management of the EYFS are good. The newly appointed headteacher ensures that she is actively involved in the operation of the nursery and reception and in planning further developments.

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:

- establish a whole school system for tracking and monitoring children's progress
- establish a whole school approach to meeting the needs of children at the early stages of learning English as an additional language

- ensure that there is an effective policy for developing children's awareness of different lifestyles and cultures
- keep under review the ratio of children to classroom and communal areas to ensure that there is sufficient space for easy movement and effective learning.

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	Downsend School - Epsom Lodge		
DCSF number	936/6199		
Unique reference number	125378		
EY URN (for registered childcare only)	EY307658		
Type of school	Pre-preparatory		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1941		
Age range of pupils	2-6 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 33	Girls: 25	Total: 58
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 34	Girls: 29	Total: 63
Number of pupils aged 0-3 in registered childcare provision	Boys: 12	Girls: 11	Total: 23
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,510 – 3,340		
Annual fees (childcare)	£8 per session		
Address of school	6 Norman Avenue Epsom Surrey KT17 3AB		
Telephone number	01372721824		
Fax number	01372 385438		
Email address	jacqueline.birchall@downsend.co.uk; christine.mcinnnes@downsend.co.uk		
Headteacher	Miss Jacqueline Birchall		
Proprietor	Cognita Schools Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Anne Duffy HMI		
Dates of inspection	16 September 2008		