

The Rowans School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	315/6002
Unique Reference Number	102685
URN for registered childcare and social care	EY240558
Inspection number	329578
Inspection dates	14 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Michèle Messaoudi

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

The Rowans School is a non-selective, independent, co-educational preparatory school with charitable status. It was founded in 1936 and is situated in a large private house in a quiet residential part of Wimbledon. The school serves the local multi-cultural community. There are currently 127 pupils aged between two and a half and eight years. There are 60 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) who are taught in the Kindergarten, Nursery and Reception classes. Of these, 48 attend part-time and 41 have publicly funded nursery places. Kindergarten children have the option of staying on for a full day three days a week. A very small minority of pupils speak English as an additional language or are bilingual. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational need. The school teaches a curriculum designed to prepare pupils for the entrance examinations to local selective schools. It aims to 'provide an enabling environment so that these vital early years of education will be fun, at times challenging, whilst bringing out the best in every individual child. This will lay a firm foundation that will prepare each child for future learning. Every child matters to us.' The EYFS was last inspected in January 2005 and the school was last inspected in May 2005.

Evaluation of the school

The Rowans School provides an outstanding quality of education and meets its aims fully. It has the overwhelming support of parents who rightly express a very high level of satisfaction with the school. The breadth and balance of the curriculum and the outstanding quality of teaching enable pupils from the Kindergarten to Year 3 to make outstanding progress and develop skills that are above those expected of their

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.

age in academic, creative and physical areas of learning. The overall effectiveness of the EYFS is good. The provision for pupils' personal development is good in EYFS and outstanding from Year 1. The school has made good progress since the last inspection by Ofsted in addressing the issues related to safeguarding and recruitment procedures. It now makes outstanding provision for children's and pupils' welfare, health and safety. The premises and teaching accommodation have been considerably upgraded through extensive refurbishment and the school has extension plans in hand. The school complies with all the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The school is led very effectively by a headteacher who has a clear vision and nurtures a culture of continuous improvement, and very well supported by a cohesive team of very dedicated staff. The curriculum is outstanding. In the EYFS, its breadth provides very good coverage of the six areas of learning. The balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities in both the indoor and outdoor environments provides stimulating learning opportunities for children to explore, investigate resources and rehearse their own learning. From Year 1 to Year 3, the curriculum expands to include all the subjects of the National Curriculum with the addition of conversational French taught from Reception. Curriculum planning ensures that a wide range of creative, physical and practical activities are offered alongside focused preparation for selective entrance examinations. The most salient of its many exemplary features are the provision for English and mathematics, specialist teaching, enrichment programme and subject leadership.

There is a strong emphasis on reading in the school. Reading skills are taught very well from an early age, resulting in pupils having excellent comprehension skills by the end of Years 2 and 3. Creative writing is developed to an exceptionally high standard and pupils have worthwhile writing opportunities in most subjects. Speaking and listening skills are well promoted and pupils' confidence is fostered well through weekly public presentations in assembly and regular debates in the spring and summer terms. The school is seeking to improve speaking skills further by increasing drama activities. All aspects of mathematics are taught equally well and pupils develop very good mental calculation agility and excellent problem-solving skills. The expertise of subject specialists further motivates and stretches pupils in music, French, science, Year 3 geography, physical education (PE) and games. Subject leaders have a very clear picture of the standards and strengths in their subject areas and they drive further improvement with enthusiasm and very high expectations. Schemes of work and medium-term plans ensure that pupils experience continuity and progression in their learning.

The resources available to teach the curriculum are good. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) has broadened since the last inspection owing to the purchase of interactive white boards and laptop computers. Provision for ICT is now very good and it is used effectively in most subjects. The school has correctly identified the need to continue ICT training for staff to develop their expertise and

confidence further. The curriculum is greatly enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities and educational visits including sports, art and French clubs, drama workshops that enhance history and science, as well as visits to museums, theatres, farms, parks and Westminster Abbey. In addition, pupils can opt to have piano, violin and ballet lessons.

Teaching is outstanding across the age range. Small-sized classes ensure that staff have excellent knowledge of pupils' prior attainments, aptitudes and emotional state. This enables them to plan work that meets their needs closely, either by giving them extra visual support, tasks of varying difficulty, one-to-one attention or by grouping them in a way that results in the best possible learning. Staff plan exciting practical tasks in all subjects to optimise learning. All staff are skilful in asking open-ended questions that challenge pupils' thinking. They encourage pupils to refine their thinking by implementing Dr De Bono's 'thinking hats' strategy effectively. Staff maintain a very good pace in lessons which helps pupils focus their attention from task to task. The best practice maintains a consistent level of challenge which stretches all pupils and enables them to make rapid progress. Teaching assistants contribute very effectively to the high quality of learning.

The school assesses pupils' learning using a variety of methods. The quality of marking has improved significantly since the last inspection. Teachers write useful comments that are subject-specific, linked to learning objectives, and show pupils exactly how to improve. Consequently, pupils feel very well supported. Although parents receive two annual progress reports and have two annual opportunities to meet their children's teachers formally, a small minority of parents feel insufficiently well-informed of their children's progress.

The outstanding curriculum and teaching enable pupils to make outstanding progress in a relatively short time. They attain exceptionally high standards in mathematics, English and science. They develop excellent skills in music, art, PE and games which they can pursue to a high level. They learn to work productively on their own and in teams. All this prepares them exceptionally well for the next stage of their education and most pupils in Years 2 and 3 are successful in gaining entrance to a school of their parents' choice.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The school makes outstanding provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is reflected in pupils' good attendance, visible enjoyment, confidence and excellent attitude to learning. One parent says, 'My child has flourished at The Rowans. Discipline is very good, creating an atmosphere ripe for learning. Activities are varied and my child is encouraged to be a kind and polite child.' Whilst the behaviour of most pupils is consistently good, a core of pupils do not always show the expected level of self-discipline. Pupils from Year 1 indicate that what they like best about their school are the teachers, making many friends and the beautiful outdoor environment. One pupil captured the collective sentiment when

saying, 'I think the school is great and the playground is brilliant.' Pupils enjoy the family atmosphere and work and play harmoniously together.

Pupils take their responsibilities as learners, monitors and house captains seriously. They are encouraged to think of those who are less fortunate than them and they help raise funds for various charities. They perform concerts for elderly people in the locality. They participate in numerous musical and drama events, and poetry competitions, which fosters their creative talents and boosts their self-esteem and confidence. They develop a sound understanding of British institutions through the curriculum and educational visits.

Diversity is promoted effectively in EYFS through the display of multicultural resources and the use of greetings in various languages. As they move up the school, pupils learn about the basic beliefs and practices of the main world religions. A photographic display showed pupils visiting a local synagogue.

Through religious education and personal, social and health education, pupils develop a good sense of right and wrong. For example, those in Years 2 and 3 reflected on the positive and negative implications of temptation and persuasion based on a Christian reading of the story of Adam and Eve.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding, supported by robust policies and procedures that are implemented consistently and reviewed annually. The safeguarding policies and procedures comply fully with the latest guidance. A single central register is in place recording that all necessary checks have been carried out. Staff are appropriately trained and well aware of child protection duties and procedures. All staff have appropriate first aid training including paediatric qualifications for EYFS staff. Appropriate records are kept of any injuries, accidents or medical needs and the required range of health and safety checks are regularly carried out. The school fulfils its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002.

The staff create a happy family atmosphere that engenders a positive sense of well-being amongst the pupils and they exercise vigilant supervision throughout the day. Consequently, pupils feel safe and well cared for, and instances of bullying are rare. Pupils talk confidently about safety procedures and the ways they can keep themselves and each other safe. They demonstrate an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles, both through their healthy eating choices and their enjoyment of physical activity. Most pupils walk, cycle or scooter to school.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of EYFS is good. The leadership is good because staff work together as a close team and are encouraged to further their professional

development by identifying strengths and acting upon their weaker features. This results in creating a stimulating professional environment in which staff strive to develop their skills to a very high standard. Good assessment procedures are in place to record and monitor children's progress. Although assessment information is used well to plan worthwhile and stimulating activities both indoors and outdoors, it is not used sufficiently rigorously to identify the children's starting points.

Children start in the Nursery class with skills that are in line with the national expectation. By the end of Reception, they make outstanding progress in all areas of learning, all of them having reached the early learning goals and a high proportion of them having exceeded them. Their overall personal development and enjoyment is reflected in their high level of confidence, respectful relationships, good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. However, their independent learning skills are not as highly developed as they could be.

Children engage well in what they do and achieve well because their needs are well served by the outstanding curriculum and teaching. The structured teaching of letters and sounds, and the mixing of dough to create their own letters, has a positive impact on children's reading and writing skills, which are developing at a very good rate, including those of the boys. Good induction arrangements are in place and children have settled very well. The EYFS meets all the welfare requirements. Staff are sensitive to the children's needs and those who are ill are well attended to.

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:

- further develop the use of ICT across subjects
- further develop children's independent learning skills in the EYFS
- use the information from EYFS assessments more rigorously to sharpen the identification of children's starting points.

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 Rowans School		
DCSF number	315/6002		
Unique reference number	102685		
EY URN (for registered childcare only)	EY240558		
Type of school	Day pre-preparatory school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1936		
Age range of pupils	3-8 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 62	Girls: 17	Total: 79
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 26	Girls: 22	Total: 48
Number of pupils aged 0-3 in registered childcare provision	Boys: 5	Girls: 4	Total: 9
Annual fees	£6,600 (Reception) £7,350 (Years 1-3)		
Annual fees (childcare)	£1,250/term for half days in Kindergarten and Nursery		
Address of school	19 Drax Avenue Wimbledon London SW20 0EG		
Telephone number	020 8946 8220		
Fax number	020 8944 0822		
Email address	therowansschool@btinternet.com		
Headteacher	Mrs Elaine Tyrrell		
Proprietor	Corporation of King's College School		
Reporting inspector	Mrs Michèle Messaoudi		
Dates of inspection	14 October 2008		