

Airthrie and Hillfield Dyslexia Trust

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	916/6037
Unique Reference Number	115799
URN for registered childcare	EY256317
Inspection number	329724
Inspection dates	14 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Robert Drew

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 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

Airthrie School provides non-selective independent education for pupils aged 3 to 11 years. Its aims are focused strongly on realising the potential of all and producing well-rounded individuals. The adjacent Hillfield Dyslexia Trust provides specialist advice and support to staff and some pupils of the school, but does not constitute a discrete unit for the teaching of pupils with dyslexia. Airthrie occupies linked Victorian houses in a mature residential district of Cheltenham. Its site is next to the extensive sports complex of a prestigious public school in the town and all pupils of Year 1 and above have access to this. There are currently 162 pupils on roll, with 14 of these being part-time in the nursery. The school was last inspected by Ofsted in September 2005.

Evaluation of the school

The school provides a good education and it continues to meet all statutory requirements. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is good. Aspects of its work are outstanding, notably the behaviour of pupils and their overall spiritual, moral social and cultural development. Extra curricular provision is also exceptional in its quality and range. The ethos of the school is one in which pupils are committed to working hard, respecting others and being positive and enthusiastic. The headteacher sets this tone and is fully supported by staff and parents.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good for pupils of all ages including those in the EYFS, offering a wide range of subjects with more specialist teaching provision than is common. While good emphasis is placed on English, mathematics and science, other National Curriculum subjects also play a significant part. Specialist teaching in art, drama, music, physical education, science and information and communication technology (ICT) enhances the curriculum. Music offers high quality activities, such as the chamber group and choirs for specific occasions. Drama is a positive addition, though

constrained by the lack of a large, constantly accessible performance space. The pupils' high-quality art work is much in evidence around the school.

Extra-curricular activities make an outstanding contribution to pupils' experience. The range is extensive and the quality very high, with scope for competing regularly at the very highest level. Sports activities, especially swimming, are exceptional, with the school regularly winning regional events for small schools and coming 3rd in the national finals at Sheffield's Olympic pool this year. Excellent use is made of the adjacent facilities of another school for swimming, gymnastics, cross country and other sports. Far more pupils than might be expected for a relatively small school take individual instrumental lessons. Another striking feature is the impressive programme of visits to places of historical, cultural or environmental interest, matched by numerous visitors coming in, such as artists, musicians, broadcasters and parents sharing insights into their profession or their ethnic or cultural backgrounds.

Teaching is at the heart of the school's work and is good. Pupils are very keen to learn, so that behaviour is outstanding and the scope for progress considerable. Lessons typically have clear explanations, good use of resources, very positive relationships and good use of ICT. Staff show good subject knowledge and treat pupils with real care and respect. In the very best lessons, clear planning ensures that learning proceeds at a very strong pace, with extensive involvement of pupils and work cleverly customised to meet the range of ability and interest in the group. Where teaching is satisfactory, learning objectives are planned but not given such close attention, while pace and provision across the ability range are adequate but not strong. Generally planning is less well structured in these lessons.

Assessment is good, with regular marking of work and close monitoring of medium-term progress. Staff records include frequent assessments of the standards pupils are reaching and the skills they acquire. There is scope for the wider use of National Curriculum levels to give this sharper definition. Pupils have a general sense of how well they are doing, though their knowledge of how to move to even higher standards is variable. Teachers make good use of assessment to place pupils in the most appropriate sets for much of their work. Small groups working at different pace help to ensure good overall progress by all pupils. While the data on those leaving Reception is good, it is not currently used to guide aspirations for the next phase, for instance in shaping pupils' targets for the end of Year 2.

Progress overall is good. While aspects of provision are capable of further improvement, pupils make impressive gains between entering and leaving the school. Many start with above-average skills and knowledge, and the dedication and skill of staff ensure that they leave with academic standards well above average, as demonstrated in high test scores in Year 6, and with outstanding personal qualities.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding because teachers successfully nurture the abilities of each pupil through praise and high-quality care. The school takes every opportunity to create small classes and

teaching groups and as one parent commented, *'Every child is treated as an individual and given the appropriate level of attention and help'*. There is ample time in assemblies and good opportunity in lessons for pupils to be reflective and to consider values beyond the immediate and material. Pupils are encouraged to think about others and to develop their own ideas and beliefs. They are listened to and respected. Responses to the inspection questionnaire show parents in strong agreement with the school's values. Pupils have a very positive view of school and their learning benefits. Teachers spend very little time being distracted by inappropriate behaviour and can focus on promoting personal and academic progress.

Pupils are extremely proud of their school and enthusiastic about their achievements. For example, they talked proudly about donating toys to Operation Christmas Child. They are articulate and well-mannered and demonstrate outstanding behaviour in lessons and in the playground. They report that they enjoy coming to school and have many friends. Older pupils declare, *'I don't want to leave!'*

Pupils develop an increasing sense of responsibility as they undertake tasks such as acting as playground buddies and organising classroom resources. Older pupils help and play with the younger ones, contributing to their self-esteem and sense of school community. Pupils in Year 6 also have the opportunity to become monitors and undertake extra responsibilities. They have good social skills and manners, particularly in the dining room. Older pupils and their parents receive helpful guidance to prepare them for moving to the next stage of their education.

This is a harmonious school community where everyone is respected. Pupils have a good understanding of different cultures, fostered through assemblies and the religious education curriculum. Attendance is broadly in line with national averages for primary schools.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Provision for welfare, health and safety is good and all required policies are in place. Staff supervise the pupils vigilantly during lessons and when playing outside. They pay close attention to the needs of every child. There is a suitable fire-risk policy and fire evacuations and staff training are carried out regularly. Good procedures for first aid are in place and an appropriate number of adults have been trained.

The designated person for child protection has undergone training to the required standard and all staff are currently being trained. The child protection policy has been recently updated. Pupils report that they feel safe and are well looked after, as confirmed by their confident conduct. Pupils are encouraged to stay healthy, particularly through a good physical education curriculum. The school meets its requirements in respect of the Disability Discrimination Act and in respect of checks on prospective employees.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The effectiveness of this stage is good because staff teach and support children well. They have created an attractive learning environment in which children thoroughly enjoy school. Overall progress is good, and is especially strong in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy. Creativity develops well, for example through music, imaginative play and creative work in art and technology. The school makes good use of its space and progress in physical development is good.

Staff know their children well and enjoy very good links with parents. Good relationships are evident in lessons and an appropriate range of stimulating activities is planned for children, reflecting their cultural backgrounds wherever possible. Behaviour is excellent and children show extremely caring and friendly attitudes to each other and staff. They turn to staff with confidence when needing help or reassurance, but are equally confident working independently, often initiating enquiries through free-play activities. Assessment procedures are being adjusted to meet new EYFS requirements. Day-to-day observations are noted on individual profiles, providing a comprehensive commentary on general progress. The tracking of gains in specific areas of development is not yet fully in place.

Leadership and management are good, the coordinator working closely with the headteacher and other agencies. Arrangements for induction and transfer to the next stage of learning are good and all welfare requirements are met.

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:

- increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring that factors already leading to excellent practice become more widespread, notably: providing more active involvement of pupils in lessons and in their knowledge of their own progress, preparing tasks which match the full ability range of the class and developing consistently clear lesson planning
- make sure the detailed and valuable evaluations made at the end of EYFS are used to set targets for the end of Key Stage 1.

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	Airthrie and Hillfield Dyslexia Trust		
DCSF number	9166037		
Unique reference number	115799		
Type of school	Primary school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1940		
Age range of pupils	3-11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 59	Girls: 89	Total: 148
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 3	Girls: 11	Total: 14
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,000		
Address of school	27-29 Christchurch Road Cheltenham Gloucestershire GL50 2NY		
Telephone number	01242 512837		
Fax number	01242 579583		
Email address	sarah@airthrie-school.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs A E Sullivan		
Proprietor	Mrs A E Sullivan and Mr M J Sullivan		
Reporting inspector	Robert Drew		
Date of inspection	14 November 2008		