

Meoncross School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	850/6026
Unique Reference Number	116563
Inspection number	329734
Inspection dates	12–13 June 2008
Reporting inspector	David Young

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.

Information about the school

Meoncross School is a non-selective, independent day school, for pupils aged between 2½ and 16 years, situated in a residential area of Stubbington, near Fareham in Hampshire. There are 411 pupils on roll including 41 part-time pupils in the Kindergarten. The school opened in 1953 and is currently under the proprietorship of Cognita Schools. The school aims for '*academic excellence; achievement in a wide range of activities; care and respect for the individual; good discipline and a sense of order; and service to others in the school and community*'. This is the school's first inspection by Ofsted; it was previously inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate in February 2002. The early years provision was last inspected by Ofsted in January 2005.

Evaluation of the school

Meoncross School provides a good quality of education and achieves its stated aims. The curriculum places an appropriate emphasis on key skills in each key stage and broadens appropriately for pupils of secondary school age. As a result of well-planned learning opportunities and effective teaching pupils make good progress during their time in the school. The personal development of pupils is given high priority, enhanced by the warmth of relationships throughout the school and good quality care from staff. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school's provision and achievements. Inspectors agree with the school's judgements about its provision as recorded in the school's information and evaluation form. It meets all the regulations for registration and has made satisfactory progress since its last inspection.

Quality of education

Meoncross provides a good curriculum which meets the needs of pupils in each section of the school. Planning for the youngest pupils follows the Foundation Stage guidelines and is particularly strong for Reception pupils. Transition arrangements into Key Stage 1 and then into Key Stage 2 are smooth and well structured. The curriculum for pupils in Key Stage 1 has particular strengths in reading, creative writing, art and the use of information and communication technology (ICT).

In Key Stage 2 the curriculum is organised into separate subjects with an appropriate emphasis on English and mathematics. Pupils study the full range of National Curriculum subjects with the addition of French and personal, social and health

education (PSHE). In Year 6, additional successful opportunities are introduced for pupils to include study skills and cooking in their curriculum. Physical education and games are effective elements for all pupils with a range of good extra-curricular activities on offer. Some pupils and parents expressed the view that they would like a wider range of extra-curricular activities in addition to sports; the inspectors agree with this view. The curriculum is also extended by the arrangements for a number of subject related trips and visits. Wall displays in various parts of the school attest to the success of these visits.

In Key Stages 3 and 4, the curriculum retains its subject based structure offering the full range of National Curriculum subjects. In addition, pupils benefit from the opportunity to study German and Spanish in Key Stage 3. Pupils have increasing access to ICT within a variety of subject areas, an improvement since the last inspection. As a result, together with the time allocated to ICT in each key stage, pupils achieve very good results in ICT Key Skills examinations during Key Stages 3 and 4. Resources available to support the curriculum are generally satisfactory although the range of books, particularly non-fiction, in the senior library, is rather limited. In Key Stage 4 the school provides a diverse range of GCSE subject options and is justifiably proud of its record of closely matching timetabled provision to individual pupils' choices. Three separate sciences are taught from Year 7 and are available as GCSE options, providing appropriate challenge for higher achieving pupils. In addition, new options in media studies, graphics, electronics and leisure and tourism broaden the choices for all pupils. These developments represent successful progress since the last inspection.

There is an absence of whole-school curriculum planning as at the time of the last inspection. The school has separate curriculum plans for each key stage which are used appropriately to assist planning for lessons. However, it is not possible to guarantee that there is appropriate progression of knowledge, concepts and skills in all subjects as these have not been carefully mapped to show pupils' entitlement from entry to the school through to GCSE examinations. In some cases, teachers are not aware of the standards achieved by pupils in earlier stages of learning.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good and has improved since the last inspection. The best lessons in all key stages and across a range of subjects are characterised by lively, stimulating teaching. Activities are carefully structured to provide increasing challenge as lessons progress. Pupils respond well to teachers' questioning, paired and group work, and written activities which are appropriately demanding. Lesson objectives are clear, digital projectors often guide the structure of activities, and pupils have good opportunities to check their understanding. Lessons proceed with good pace and lively interactions between pupils and teachers. Where teaching is less successful, the pace and challenge of learning activities is too slow because teachers do not have sufficient knowledge of the standard of work of which pupils are capable.

During their time at the school pupils make good progress. Good use is made of a variety of assessment data to inform teachers' expectations of what pupils can

achieve, although its use to track progress is inconsistent. The school has recently introduced electronic software for the management of assessment data which is designed to ensure that all teachers have access to appropriate information to assist their planning for future lessons. The marking of pupils' work is variable and at its best provides appropriate evidence to inform thorough reports on the progress pupils are making in the various subjects studied. Progress is good, but not consistent for all classes, in Key Stage 1. Pupils make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 2 where achievement for the highest attaining pupils is generally better in mathematics and science than in English. Pupils achieve well in their GCSE examinations with almost all achieving 5 or more higher grade GCSE results. The school's analysis of results shows positive 'added value' across the secondary age range, although not all pupils achieve their predicted grades in the full range of subjects studied.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good and their cultural development is satisfactory. The school places a strong emphasis on treating all members of its community with respect and courtesy so that pupils grow in confidence as they move through the school. Respect for others and very good relationships at every level are a feature of the school. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good; they respond to the high expectations set for them. They work enthusiastically in most lessons and especially enjoy lively discussions and sharing ideas. Pupils say that they enjoy school and this is evident in their good attendance and punctuality. They understand right from wrong and show by their attitudes to responsibilities in school that they care about their community.

Pupils are aware of the needs of others and participate keenly in supporting a range of charities, both local and global. An extensive range of sporting activities in school and in local fixtures allows pupils to join in such community events as well as encouraging healthy exercise. Assemblies and reflective moments in lessons provide good opportunities for pupils to reflect on deeper and more meaningful issues. The citizenship elements of the good PSHE programme ensure that pupils have a growing awareness of public services and institutions in England. Through a range of visits and visitors, their religious studies and carefully planned assemblies pupils gain a sound understanding of aspects of other faiths and cultures. However, this is not developed systematically and pupils have only limited opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of the rich cultural diversity of modern society. Pupils are well prepared for their future through the good standards they attain and the careful guidance that is given to them help make wise choices for their adult life and general well-being.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is good. The school has prepared and implemented a range of policies which ensure that pupils are safe in school and when out on educational visits. Arrangements for health and safety audits, including fire safety, are robust and monitored appropriately. Arrangements

for first aid and for the care of pupils who may be ill are excellent and carefully monitored. The management of pupils' behaviour is good and appropriate sanctions are implemented and recorded for any instances of serious misbehaviour. The school has made good arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils; the nominated persons for child protection and all staff are trained appropriately and understand their respective roles. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy, and they take regular exercise. A significant number of secondary pupils do not believe that the school helps them to make healthy choices about their diets. Healthy eating is adequately addressed through aspects of the curriculum and healthy choices are available in school meals and vending machines. However, the food choices available at break time sometimes contradict these healthy messages. The school fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and has an appropriate plan in place to increase accessibility.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has robust procedures in place to ensure the suitability of staff to work with children prior to confirmation of their employment. These procedures have recently been updated to comply with the latest guidance and include the maintenance of a single central register.

School's premises and accommodation

The school's premises and accommodation are suitable to support effective teaching and learning and ensure a safe environment for all pupils. Some classrooms are at their full capacity but do not currently hinder pupils' ability to work comfortably. There is insufficient secure storage for pupils' personal belongings and a number of pupils reported their concern in their responses to the inspection questionnaires. Specialist accommodation includes science laboratories, two ICT suites, and a spacious art room and enhances pupils' opportunities to engage in practical learning activities. The outdoor facilities are used well to promote healthy physical activity.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides an extensive range of printed information for parents and prospective parents, supplemented by an attractive website. The information meets the requirements of the regulations. Parents are provided with comprehensive written reports on pupils' progress, which itemise recent work covered in various subjects together with helpful target areas for further improvement. Parents are made aware of the availability of appropriate school policies.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's procedures for handling complaints are clearly documented, available to parents, and meet the regulatory requirements. One formal complaint has been recorded in the past 12 months.

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:

- ensure continuity and progression of learning in all subjects through the evaluation and development of existing schemes of work to show the knowledge, understanding and skills to be taught at each age and in each key stage
- audit, document, and where required improve provision across the curriculum to enhance pupils' awareness of the richness and diversity of multicultural society.

School details

Name of school	Meoncross School		
DCSF number	850/6026		
Unique reference number	116563		
Type of school	All age day school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1953		
Age range of pupils	2½-16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 229	Girls: 141	Total: 370
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 22	Girls: 19	Total: 41
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,870-£2,670		
Address of school	Burnt House Lane Stubbington Fareham Hampshire PO14 2EF		
Telephone number	01329 662182		
Fax number	01329 664680		
Email address	enquiries@meoncross.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr C Ford		
Proprietor	Cognita Schools Ltd		
Reporting inspector	David Young		
Dates of inspection	12–13 June 2008		