

Charterhouse Square School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	201/6354
Unique Reference Number	100463
Inspection number	330407
Inspection dates	4–5 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Mark Lindfield HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended.

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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.

Information about the school

Charterhouse Square School is situated in the Barbican in central London. It was founded in 1985 and occupies a five-story Victorian building overlooking Charterhouse Square. The school is non-selective and provides for 179 pupils aged from 3 to 11 years. The school has two Early Years Foundation Stage classes, a Nursery and Reception, which together contain 60 pupils. The school's ownership changed in March 2008 to Cognita Schools Limited. The headteacher took up post in January 2009. The school was last inspected in March 2006.

The school aims to *'recognise and provide for the fact that each child is an individual and to plan a curriculum for individual as well as common experiences'*.

Evaluation of the school

Charterhouse Square School provides a good standard of education for its pupils with some outstanding features and successfully meets its aims. The school envelops its pupils in a very supportive, caring and friendly environment and they respond in turn by exhibiting outstanding behaviour. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and now meets all except two of the regulations.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. The school places a strong emphasis on developing basic skills and at the same time provides a broad range of high quality subjects which helps pupils to develop well in a variety of areas. Specialist teaching in languages, physical education (PE), drama and music is a strong feature in the school. Pupils have regular access to information and communication technology (ICT) and use word processing and animation programmes confidently. The provision for PE has increased recently and includes a wide range of swimming and outdoor games. The use of local leisure facilities compensates well for the lack of space in school and allows pupils to make good physical and sporting progress. There are a wide variety of activities on offer after school which further enrich the curriculum including judo, chess, drama and music. The numbers attending are high and this helps them to make good progress in these activities.

All curriculum areas are underpinned by policy statements that identify aims and objectives clearly. They include links to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which is outstanding. Personal, social and health education is good and includes a varied content including healthy lifestyles, religious education and current affairs. The school uses published schemes to support teaching in mathematics and science and these ensure good progress across the school but, on occasion, do not stretch each child as an individual. The school uses a variety of published literacy schemes to teach key elements of English, but pupils' progress in writing is only satisfactory overall because these skills are not applied consistently across the school by pupils of all ages.

Teaching and assessment are good overall and result in pupils making good progress. The existence of very good relationships between staff and pupils helps to encourage positive attitudes in classes and set a calm ambience. Furthermore, it ensures that pupils are confident in seeking help when they need it and staff are quick to respond. During the better lessons this support is not required because assessments are regularly used to set tasks that meet the learning needs of all pupils, irrespective of their ability. Pupils benefit from specialist teachers whose strong subject knowledge results in their enthusiastic responses and good academic progress. With the strong support of the new leadership, staff are using a wider range of teaching strategies with increased confidence. They are moving away from an over-reliance on set texts to provide different learning opportunities within a lesson. Learning objectives are regularly shared with pupils and either recorded on the board or described orally and extension activities that complement these objectives help the more able pupils to progress further.

Teachers keep a careful record of the results of assessments of pupils in their classes. Weekly tests in mathematics and English are used to prepare pupils for common entrance examinations and to gauge their progress. Assessments are used to set individual English and mathematical learning targets and these are shared with pupils and parents and recorded in communication books. A close team approach ensures that staff share information about each individual pupil's progress. The nature of this information makes it difficult to monitor and report progress against national benchmarks until the latter years. Parents report that they would appreciate knowing their child's nationally referenced grades during their school life. The school has identified as a priority the development of an overarching system to more closely monitor and record the progress of pupils against national benchmarks.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding. There is a very friendly, welcoming atmosphere at the school and pupils say that they like their school and the staff help them with their work. They made comments such as 'I love my school and am happy'. The behaviour of the pupils is outstanding and the encouragement for pupils to enjoy their school life comes through strongly in

a number of ways. Pupils all play well together and show very positive attitudes towards each other. The 'befrienders' scheme, where an older pupil takes a younger one as a partner, works well. Older pupils take a pride in this role and set a high standard of behaviour for the younger pupils. When pupils were asked if they thought a school council was a good idea they felt that it was not necessary as they felt listened to. The pupils enjoy school and their attendance is very good, with pupils even keen to come to school during the recent snow. They know the simple school rules and move around the building carefully and considerately under vigilant staff supervision. The headteacher holds weekly assemblies of a spiritual nature and a local priest visits the school weekly. Religious services are held in the Charterhouse chapel and in a local church. The school is well respected locally and makes a good contribution to the local community. The pupils raise money for local, national and international charities. The pupils put on a Christmas concert for parents and a play during the summer term, which are well received. An annual sports day at Coram Fields is also very popular with parents. The school's focus on teaching touch-typing provides a good preparation for pupils' future lives. The generally strong provision in mathematics and English helps to prepare pupils for their secondary education well.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school has made outstanding provision to safeguard the welfare, health and safety of the pupils. The school has devised and implemented a wide range of policies which include health and safety, behaviour, anti-bullying and educational visits outside school, which are all currently under review by the new headteacher. The competent health and safety officer ensures that pupils are safe and secure on site at all times through the continual monitoring and reviewing of all safety procedures. The pupils are adamant that there is no bullying and are proud of their school with the prefects taking a leading role in setting high standards of behaviour. They are encouraged to eat healthily and take regular exercise. There are trained first aiders on site at all times and all accidents are diligently recorded. The procedures for safeguarding pupils are good and the designated member of staff has received recent training. The school is vigilant about fire safety and all procedures are rigorously implemented. The attendance and admission registers are kept according to the regulations. The school fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act and has begun to implement its accessibility plan.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has compiled a comprehensive central record that includes all members of staff and volunteers. They have adopted a more rigorous approach to initiating checks prior to the appointment of new staff and these now meet all requirements. The school's new leadership has completed the required medical checks on new appointments and are in the process of completing these checks on longer serving existing staff.

School's premises and accommodation

The school premises provide a welcoming environment for its pupils. All classrooms and corridors are well maintained and brightly decorated with pupils' work and learning. Though space is at a premium, the school makes good use of the room available and classrooms are tidy and well organised. The facilities for pupils who are ill do not meet requirements, although staff take good care of pupils who are unwell as they await collection. The area used is a shared space and does not have a separate washbasin. Good use is made of the garden in Charterhouse Square which allows children to play outside at lunchtime, come snow or shine.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides a satisfactory range of information for parents and carers. There is an attractive prospectus which gives parents a clear idea of the school, including information about the curriculum. The headteacher has kept parents fully informed of new developments since she took over. The current website is due to be re-launched in the near future. There is a range of information which is available to parents on request and the school is now planning to ensure that this is more readily available. There are regular informative newsletters and the school emails parents of any important changes which they may need to be made aware of. A high proportion of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire. They expressed very positive views about the school. They made comments such as 'we are very happy indeed...our daughter is thriving here', with another saying 'A wonderful happy school.' A small number of parents are unaware of the complaints procedure and the school is taking steps to address this.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's procedures for handling complaints meet requirements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision is effective in meeting the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children enjoy their school life and each child is very well known to the staff who treat them all equally. All children make good, and in some cases very good progress, in their learning and development in relation to their starting points. Parents and carers feel that they are involved in their children's education and are given good information on their progress. The children work well on their own and with others. They show that they understand what they are learning and are confident to ask questions. Children from different backgrounds and cultures work and play well together. There is a good balance of adult-led and child-led activities that results in active learning. Children have frequent opportunities to

choose their own activity from the wide and varied selection on offer and most work well independently.

Due to the limitations of the premises, children do not have as many opportunities for free-flow choice of play out-of-doors as they might have. The staff do all they can to provide a wealth of investigative and creative activities through their planned range of purposeful activities. Children's personal development is good and their well-being is promoted well. They respond to the enthusiastic, supportive staff who work very well together as a team. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. There are very good procedures in place to ensure the children's health and safety. Staff are vigilant, provide strong support and keep suitable records, policies and procedures which ensure that the children are in a safe, well managed environment.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ("the Regulations"), with the exception of those listed below (*delete if not applicable*)

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- ensure that all staff have the appropriate medical checks completed (paragraph 4(2)(a)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill (paragraph 5 (l)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- ensure greater progress in pupils' writing through their consistent and incremental application of key skills
- develop an overarching system related to national benchmarks, to track and record the progress of pupils from their arrival to the time of their departure from the school

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- use information from assessments more effectively to provide work for each pupil which matches their level of ability and builds on their prior 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	Charterhouse Square School		
DCSF number	201/6354		
Unique reference number	100463		
Type of school	Pre-preparatory and preparatory		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 1985		
Age range of pupils	3-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 87	Girls: 92	Total: 179
Annual fees (day pupils)	£11,550		
Address of school	40 Charterhouse Square		
Telephone number	0207 600 3805		
Email address	cssch@gotadsl.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Caroline Lloyd		
Proprietor	Cognita Schools Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Mark Lindfield HMI		
Dates of inspection	4–5 February 2009		