

Park Hill School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	314/6059
Unique Reference Number	102616
Inspection number	330414
Inspection dates	25 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Linda Kelsey 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).

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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

This small preparatory school is situated in Kingston-upon-Thames close to Richmond Park. It is housed in a large Victorian building with a large garden but limited space for expansion. Originally founded in 1949 it was bought by the current proprietor in 1988. It provides education for all children from the age of three years, for girls until they are 11 years old, and boys until they are eight years old. There are currently 62 full-time pupils and 24 who attend part-time. After school and before school care is provided daily and pupils can arrive from 8.15am. Four pupils are identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities but currently none has a statement of special educational need. Twelve pupils use English as an additional language and 37 children are in receipt of nursery funding. It was last inspected in 2006. The school aims to develop the whole child and develop confident and balanced individuals.

Evaluation of the school

This is a good school which achieves its aims and provides pupils with a good academic standard. Pupils behave impeccably and staff ensure that all pupils receive a rich and diverse education which covers their range of ages and abilities, as well as their cultural and language needs. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision is outstanding. As a result, most pupils are well prepared for their futures and gain entrance to their first choice schools from the age of seven years. The school has addressed the health and safety issues raised at the time of the last report and now all appropriate checks are carried out on staff. Parents are confident that they now get the information they require from school even though some said they did not know about a complaints procedure. However, the school complies fully with this procedure and it is referred to in the prospectus and on the web site.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good, broad and balanced and covers all subjects of the National Curriculum and the Early Years Foundation Stage areas of learning. In addition, all children from Reception onwards study French and many pupils, throughout the school, learn to play a musical instrument or to dance. Parents, particularly those representing the wider and diverse nature of the community, are welcomed into the

school and organise sessions so that pupils learn more about different religions, faiths and cultures from around the world. Community cohesion is a good aspect of the school with its additional links to the local church and older residents of the community.

There is a wide range of choices for extra curricular activities, including modern dance and ballet and for visiting places outside the school such as museums, churches and parks. Sport, including netball, cricket and football, is part of the school curriculum and takes place at the local sports centre. Specialist teaching is a strength of the school with specialists working part-time to provide physical education, science, music, French and art. The school makes good use of its partnership with the local university, encouraging staff to study for further qualifications and by inviting students to practise in the school.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory overall. On the whole, good behaviour management and good use of classroom support assistants result in the majority of pupils making good progress from their starting points. The school judged teaching as good but some parents expressed concern about variability in its quality. They are right because there are some inconsistencies across the school. Where teaching is good, pupils enjoy the lessons and fully participate. Most teachers are knowledgeable about their subject, particularly the specialist teachers in music and French. Teaching in the nursery is very good and is skilfully planned. Where teaching is strongest, good explanations are given to pupils and there is a clear understanding of their needs. When planning is good, questions draw on pupils' prior knowledge and resources are prepared and used well. However on a few occasions, teachers do not prepare thoroughly enough. Although teachers know the pupils as individuals because of the small numbers, they do not always know of their capabilities. Teaching does not always provide individualised learning to the most able or to those who may need support. Pupils are assessed at the end of the Foundation Stage but are not formally assessed using standardised, national test information, other than reading and spelling, during Key Stages 1 and 2. This means that although the school is clear about how well individual pupils do, it is not measured against national standards to show whether they could be expected to achieve more than they do.

Parent helpers are encouraged to work in school and bring a wide range of valuable knowledge and expertise to the wider curriculum. However, their practice is not always monitored sufficiently well to ensure that the techniques they use are age appropriate. This means that some very young children have to listen for long periods of time. At times not enough focus is put on practical activities to help their learning.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils study different religions and cultures of the world and go on numerous visits to places of interest and cultural heritage. Success is celebrated through assemblies and awards. There is a rich ethnic mix of cultures and beliefs and a high toleration of

each other's differences. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding in and around school and they are happy, enthusiastic individuals who enjoy coming to school. Attendance rates are high. Pupils are not afraid to express their wishes and concerns. Some of the older pupils have responsibilities, such as house or form captains and children of all ages share their views through a forum group. Pupils said that they find their teachers and helpers friendly and often make lessons fun and interesting. Relationships between children and staff are excellent. Pupils are developing a moral conscience through their recycling programme and are involved in a range of charity work both locally and overseas. Pupils visit a local home for the elderly and assist the residents and staff. This develops their greater understanding of life beyond their homes and school.

The school invites many visitors to talk about their roles and also increases pupils' understanding further by taking them to different community venues. Good provision is made for pupils to extend their communication, personal and social skills and this enables them to develop perseverance and a good work ethic. They are developing good computer skills which prepare them well for the future. Pupils have a few concerns, such as the quality of the toilet facilities and the choice of lunch time menus, about which they would like to offer suggestions. The school is aware of these issues but site restrictions mean that there is little they can do to further develop toilet facilities.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The safety and welfare of pupils at the school is outstanding. Pupils study how to stay fit and healthy and the curriculum includes a personal, social and health education programme. They know what constitutes a healthy diet and would like to be trusted to bring a healthy packed lunch to school on special occasions as well as on trips outside the school. The school conducts regular health and safety checks and evaluates, through risk assessment, where improvements need to be made. The whole site and school are clean, tidy and maintained to a safe and high standard.

Pupils are encouraged to be active at break times and sport is a well established part of the school. They go swimming regularly and attend a local sports centre for further physical recreation and sport. Physical education is one of the specialist subjects taught throughout the school. All safeguarding and employment procedures are in place, and systems which ensure pupils' safety are well established. The site is safe and well maintained to a high standard with safety playground surfaces, climbing frames and attractive gardens. Members of staff are fully qualified in first aid and have up to date first aid certificates. Bullying, which does occur occasionally and was raised as a concern by some parents, is appropriately recorded. Pupils are confident that these incidents are dealt with appropriately, although on occasions they are not always sure who they can talk to about their concerns. There are strong relationships with parents and many provide additional support to the school.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum covers all areas of learning and provision for the youngest children at the school is good. Teachers plan to a high standard to ensure that all children access the areas of learning and that they can make choices about where they want to work and play. This is based on what the teachers know about the children from regular checks on their learning and development. The children make good progress in their learning and personal development and are well prepared for the next stage of their education in the school. The provision for the welfare of the Nursery and Reception Year children is good. There are high levels of adult support so that all children are adequately supervised and cared for in a friendly and inviting environment. Resources are very good and in good order. These, including those for the outside areas, are used well to enhance the curriculum and widen the choices for children. The quality of the Nursery provision is a particular strength of the school and this is well led by the nursery teacher.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum and teaching (standard 1) and must:

- plan lessons so that teaching is always effectively matched to pupils' needs through stronger use of assessment which ensures that teachers know pupils' starting points for learning (paragraph 1(3)(c))
- ensure teachers show a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of all the pupils and use this information in their teaching (paragraph 1(3)(d)).

Inspection Judgements

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	Park Hill School		
DCSF number	314/6059		
Unique reference number	102616		
Type of school	Preparatory and pre-preparatory.		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	May 1949		
Age range of pupils	3–11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 24	Girls: 38	Total: 62
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 10	Girls: 14	Total: 24
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 7935		
Address of school	8 Queen's Road Kingston Upon Thames Surrey KT2 7SH		
Telephone number	020 8546 5496		
Fax number	020 8546 4558		
Email address	secretary@parkhillschool.com		
Headteacher	Mrs Gillian Smith		
Proprietor	Mrs M Christie		
Reporting inspector	Linda Kelsey HMI		
Dates of inspection	25 February 2009		