

# Oliver House Preparatory School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	212/6409
Unique Reference Number	134808
Inspection number	330440
Inspection dates	28–29 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Daniel Towl 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

Oliver House Preparatory School, situated on the south side of Clapham Common, originally opened in September 2004 and is owned by the Pact Educational Trust, a charity formed by parents. Originally educating Early Years Foundation Stage children, the school has been registered to admit pupils of 7 – 11 years since 2006. There were no Year 6 pupils at the time of the inspection. Further expansion of the premises is planned in the near future. Admission is non-selective. The school has a strong Catholic ethos and its overriding vision is to *'...provide an all-round education and, in partnership with parents, to lead children to aspire to noble Christian principles and ideals'*. It was last inspected in October 2005. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher took up post at the start of the current school year.

## Evaluation of the school

Oliver House Preparatory School provides a good education for its pupils especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is successful in meeting its aims. The majority of pupils make good progress in key literacy and numeracy skills. Aspects of pupils' personal development are outstanding. Teaching and assessment are satisfactory overall and good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Improvements since the last inspection have been satisfactory. The new management team have taken some appropriate steps to improve the quality of education but it is too soon to see the full impact of the changes on pupils' achievements. There are some aspects of children's safeguarding, welfare and health and safety where procedures need to be more rigorous if the school is to achieve best practice. Pupils and parents are rightly very positive about the school and what it provides. At the time of inspection the school had children who were under three for whom it was not registered. Immediate steps were taken to rectify this during the inspection and the appropriate authorities were notified.

## Quality of education

The curriculum is good. It includes all areas of learning required by the Early Years Foundation Stage, all subjects of the National Curriculum, Latin for the oldest pupils and Spanish for all pupils from Reception onwards. There is an emphasis on key skills of literacy and numeracy and the majority of pupils make good progress especially in reading, writing and arithmetic. Pupils make the best progress in the

Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1, 2 and 3. The curriculum is well organised and teachers write appropriate plans to ensure that all areas are covered. Pupils have opportunities to write for a variety of purposes such as stories, diaries and science reports. The curriculum provides pupils with appropriate practical experiences in science, art and technology and there are regular lessons using the computers in the information and communication technology (ICT) suite.

Pupils' experiences are suitably enriched by visits to places of interest such as museums. There is also a range of visitors who come to the school. During European languages week a Norwegian speaker came to talk to pupils.

Personal social and health education (PSHE) is largely taught through the character development programme, science lessons and circle time discussions for the youngest pupils. The character development programme has a strong Christian emphasis and very successfully promotes personal and social development in the areas of respect, personal resilience, making sound judgements and developing self-control.

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory. Teaching is mostly good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and there is an appropriate balance between adult-directed activities and those chosen by the children themselves. Pupils across the school are eager to learn and most work hard. The majority of them make good progress because they work willingly and diligently on the tasks set. However, despite the good progress, the full potential of lessons in Key Stages 1 and 2 is not always realised. Activities do not consistently challenge and extend pupils sufficiently in terms of the pace of learning and in the opportunities for them to be more independent in their work.

Teachers have excellent relationships with their pupils leading to high levels of mutual respect reflecting the school ethos. During discussions, pupils said that they felt they were making good progress and that their teachers were helpful. Teachers have good questioning skills and successfully use pupils' responses to seek ideas and check previous learning. Sometimes the pupils' responses could be probed further with follow-up questions to provide extra challenge. Teachers are beginning to take advantage of new classroom based ICT resources to successfully enhance pupils learning experiences. Year 4 and 5 pupils were effectively challenged, in a plenary session, with a program that required them to work with fractions and percentages.

Pupils' work is regularly marked and sometimes there are comments which pupils find helpful. Teachers make termly assessments related to national expectations and these are moderated by senior managers. Standardised tests in English and mathematics help to keep track of pupils' progress. This is a good improvement since the last inspection but the use of assessment information has yet to be embedded fully in order to provide more rigorous learning targets to inform teaching.

The small classes mean that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and English as an additional language receive good levels of individual support, enabling them to make good progress and take a full part in the activities offered.

## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. Their moral and social development is mostly outstanding as a result of the caring ethos of the school and attention to personal development supported by the character development programme. Parents commented favourably about this programme. One said *'The school's attention to detail in character development is particularly impressive'*. Parents like the way this programme and the individual pupil tutorials strongly encourage home/school links.

Attendance is good and most pupils responded on their questionnaires that they like school. About a quarter of responses though, said that it was only sometimes that their views were listened to. Some pupils indicated that behaviour sometimes interrupted learning, though inspectors found behaviour of the great majority to be outstanding both in lessons and around the school.

The good progress in basic skills, the frequent use of ICT and excellent personal development support pupils' future steps in education and economic well-being. Pupils make a good contribution to school through, for example, undertaking monitor roles, older pupils acting as buddies for younger ones and taking part in concerts and sports teams. In the wider community grandparents have been entertained to tea and Christmas charity boxes collected.

Pupils' knowledge of other faiths is supported through the celebration and discussion of religious festivals throughout the year in assemblies and through geography lessons, where other parts of the world are studied. This helps them to understand the importance of global links. Tolerance and harmony of others is promoted successfully through the character development programme. Pupils visit a number of places of interest such as the Tate Modern Gallery and Royal Albert Hall which the pupils say they enjoy. However, they have a more limited understanding of wider public institutions and services and their role in developing community cohesion.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. Suitable policies are in place to promote good behaviour and prevent bullying. Pupils did not express any concerns about bullying. There are satisfactory arrangements for undertaking risk assessments, including checks on fire risk. Policies for safeguarding pupils and child protection are satisfactory though some staff require training. The school is aware of this and has taken steps to arrange further training in the near future. There are enough suitably trained staff for first aid, including someone with paediatric

emphasis for youngest pupils. The school should pay more attention to the storage of first aid materials and medicines.

Supervision of pupils is excellent. This, coupled with pupils' very careful and courteous movement around the school, helps to keep everyone safe, including on the stairs, landings and while transferring to the annexe building. The youngest children talk about keeping safe in their circle time discussions.

Pupils learn about keeping healthy in science lessons and most bring healthy snacks for break times. The school provides good quality lunches. Regular physical education and sports clubs also help to maintain healthy bodies. The school is investigating other sports facilities to widen the opportunities available. Plans to extend the school have the potential to provide additional outdoor areas for recreation and games.

The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

### Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Satisfactory policies, arrangements and procedures exist for appointing new staff and making the required checks for suitability to work in school. The central register of staff has a small amount of information missing but the school is aware of this and steps are being taken to rectify the omissions.

### School's premises and accommodation

Overall the school's premises are in a very good condition. They are clean, tidy and well maintained. The buildings are respected by the pupils. Rooms are suitable for the current class sizes and expansion plans will provide additional indoor and outdoor facilities. The classroom and corridor areas are effectively enhanced with displays of pupils' work.

The school's risk assessments have not identified that some glazing may not be suitable and not all upstairs windows have restricted opening. Although the school has no reason to believe that catering facilities are not adequate there has been no inspection of the kitchen and its staff practices by the Environmental Health Authority. The school does not have suitable accommodation for pupils who are ill.

Current arrangements for outside play for the youngest children are satisfactory, although the requirement for them to work inside and outside on their daily activities is not easily achieved because the outdoor space is not next to the classrooms.

### Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides a wide range of information to parents through its prospectus, newsletters, termly bulletins and pupils' academic reports. There are several items of information that are not suitably documented relating to the name and address of

the proprietor and information about admissions, exclusions, provision for pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language. The school also needs to make it clear that information about child protection and complaints is available on request.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school has satisfactory procedures for handling complaints. There have been no formal complaints in the last twelve months.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and all the requirements are met in full. The leadership and management are good and the well organised systems ensure the smooth day-to-day running. Staff work well together and are very clear about the future developments.

Children receive a good start to their education, with most making very good progress from their various starting points. They settle in quickly and clearly love learning in a caring and welcoming environment. Children rapidly gain in confidence because the staff encourage them to do their best and praise their efforts. Staff have good knowledge and understanding of all aspects of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. Children have a broad curriculum allowing them to explore their own learning needs in a child-centred and supportive environment.

The objectives for the lesson are clearly identified, but sharing these with children in order to assess progress is inconsistent. There is an appropriate balance between adult-directed activities and those chosen by the children themselves. Teachers' planning covers all six areas of learning. Children's learning and development is routinely observed and recorded to show the progress they make towards the early learning goals. This provides a clear picture of their needs. The arrangements for liaising between the age groups are in place to ensure a clear progression of learning and development across the whole stage.

Children's personal development is very good. They work well together in groups and sustain their interest in all activities. Relationships are very positive at all levels and children from different backgrounds and cultures play well together. Staff are good role models and take time to spend with each child, valuing them as individuals. Children flourish in a safe and secure environment. The provision of a dedicated outdoor learning area is limited and currently a priority for future development. Healthy eating is encouraged through the wholesome food provided.

Children benefit from the close partnership between parents and staff. Details of children's progress and any problems they may encounter are communicated promptly to parents and carers who are very pleased with the provision.

## 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.

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

- ensure that in all lessons effective teaching methods and suitable activities are used and time is managed wisely (paragraph 1(3)(c)).

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

- ensure that each member of a body of persons named as the proprietor are included on the central register of staff (paragraph 4C(6 and 7)).

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

- ensure that all glazing meets safety requirements and upstairs windows have restricted opening (paragraph 5(j))
- provide suitable accommodation for pupils who are ill (paragraph 5(l)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- provide particulars of the proprietor (paragraph 6(2)(b))
- provide parents or prospective parents with information about exclusions and admissions (paragraph 6(2)(e))
- provide information about provision for special educational needs and pupils with English as an additional language (paragraph 6(2)(f))
- ensure that parents are aware they can request information about child protection (paragraph 6(2)(h))
- ensure that parents are aware they can request information about the complaints procedure (paragraph 6(2)(j)).



# 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	Oliver House Preparatory School		
DCSF number	212/6409		
Unique reference number	134808		
Type of school	Preparatory		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 2004		
Age range of pupils	2½ - 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 64	Girls: 60	Total: 124
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 12	Girls: 20	Total: 32
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 1450 - £3210		
Address of school	7 Nightingale Lane London SW4 9AH		
Telephone number	020 8772 1911		
Fax number	020 8675 0958		
Email address	enquiries@oliverhouse.org; sue.oakford@oliverhouse.org.uk		
Headteacher	Mr C Candia		
Proprietor	PACT Education Trust Ltd.		
Reporting inspector	Daniel Towl HMI		
Dates of inspection	28–29 January 2009		