

Akeley Wood Junior School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	928/6045
Unique Reference Number	122138
Inspection number	330556
Inspection dates	1–2 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Thirkell

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

Akeley Wood Junior School has been established on its extensive rural site on the Northamptonshire/Buckinghamshire border since 1988, although it can trace its history on previous sites for over one hundred years. The school is accommodated exclusively in listed buildings, parts of which date from Tudor times. It is part of Akeley Wood School, which has a senior and a lower school located on two other sites some little distance away. There are currently 215 boys and girls attending between the ages of 3 and 9. The school makes additional special provision for pupils who experience particular learning needs such as dyslexia. There are no pupils with statements of special educational need but a small minority, for whom English is not their principal language, are provided with additional support as required. There are 45 children below the age of 5 who attend the Nursery and Reception classes on the Junior School site. This aspect of the school's provision was reported on by Ofsted in May 2008 and is therefore not the subject of this inspection. The whole school was inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate in April 2006. This is the first published report by Ofsted on the school's provision for pupils between the ages of 5 and 9.

Evaluation of the school

Akeley Wood Junior school provides a good quality of education for its pupils and it is successful in meeting its aims for the academic and personal progress of pupils of all ages and abilities. Pupils feel well cared for and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They enjoy learning because they are taught well and they know that their teachers listen to what they have to say. Management has a clear vision for the development of the school and has established clear structures for the continuing development of teaching and learning and the use of assessment. Teachers work hard and demonstrate commitment to the pupils.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good and is appropriate for pupils of all ages and abilities attending the school. Its aims are clearly articulated through the curriculum policy which is supported by policies for each subject department and by planning and documentation aimed at providing a coherent learning experience for pupils.

Recent innovations have given strong emphasis to the importance of teachers planning together to support consistency and continuity of provision. Pupils have a suitably broad range of learning opportunities. The development of literacy and numeracy is given strong emphasis and this is reflected in the progress made by pupils. It is demonstrated in their creative writing and their positive response to mathematics, for example when challenged to make calculations in their heads. The school emphasises the importance of art, drama, music and sport in a child's development and this is strongly reflected in the curriculum opportunities provided. Children are introduced to learning French from the Reception class onwards. The curriculum is enriched by opportunities for pupils to take part in a suitably wide range of clubs and extra-curricular activities. Good provision is made for pupils who are identified by the school as having particular learning needs such as dyslexia.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good and there are examples of outstanding practice. Teachers generally demonstrate good subject knowledge and experience; they have benefited from a range of well-focused training opportunities provided by the school during the past year or so. As a result of the good quality of teaching, pupils of all ages and abilities make good progress. Teachers plan carefully to ensure that lessons are structured to provide a progression in learning. During the inspection lessons were used effectively to support the smooth transition of pupils to a new form or part of the school in the next academic year. The positive learning atmosphere throughout the school is reflected in good relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils. Classroom management strategies are generally good and pupils develop good learning skills from an early age. For example, they usually listen to instructions carefully and respond quickly to requests relating to the organisation of activities. Pupils' behaviour and response in the classrooms are good. In most lessons questioning and interaction between teachers and pupils are good. In a French lesson observed, conducted exclusively in the target language, an interactive white board was used effectively to engage the pupils and to support ongoing interaction between teacher and pupils. Occasionally teachers do not give sufficient consideration to planning the best use of time and spend too long speaking to the children, who as a result become restless. Overall, pupils say that the computers available in all classrooms are used infrequently.

The quality of assessment is good and is in the process of further development. Clear strategies have been developed to improve the use of assessment and to ensure that information is used effectively to support pupils' progress. The school maintains and utilises a range of assessment data to monitor progress and inform teaching and learning strategies. It recognises that this is an area of continuing development. Discussions with pupils indicate that the use of targets as a tool to support progress is not yet fully embedded in practice. The individual education plans prepared for pupils who experience learning difficulties are helpful documents in guiding the support they receive. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. Much of the marking includes suitable feedback to pupils about what is good about the work and what can be done to improve further. Most marking is carefully expressed and is appropriate to pupils' ages and abilities. Pupils say that they like to read what

teachers say about their work. However, occasionally feedback comments are not written with sufficient care and are unlikely to be helpful or entirely legible to pupils.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, in line with the aims of the school. They approach all activities at school with confidence and display high self-esteem. They respond very well to regular opportunities for reflection in assemblies and lessons about issues of importance to their future, their community and the wider world. In an assembly seen, pupils described what they felt they could do individually to make the school and the world a better place. Pupils raise money for charities devoted to ensuring that children in need are supported. They are strongly encouraged to take responsibility within school at a level appropriate to their age; younger pupils act as monitors, helping within the classroom, whilst older pupils are elected by their peers as house captains and form captains, deputy captains, sports captain and librarians, thus gaining an understanding of how democracy works. These responsibilities are taken very seriously. Although there is no school council, pupils say they can tell their teachers about any ideas they may have.

Pupils' behaviour is outstanding, as are their relationships with each other and with staff; pupils understand the expectations of staff, who provide good role models and treat them with courtesy and respect. Pupils respond well to earning house points and class badges, which are given for courtesy, initiative and effort. Each week, a pupil achieves the class badge in each class, presented in the achievement assembly to which parents are invited, and their achievement is added to the 'achievement tree'. All pupils enjoy school as shown by their good attendance and punctuality; 'school is fun' was a comment made by several pupils. Through the personal, social, health and citizenship education programme, pupils understand moral issues, learn to make informed choices, study sex education, drugs awareness and what is required for a healthy lifestyle, having regular opportunities for participation in sport and matches. Pupils' cultural development is strong and they have good opportunities to learn about their own culture, institutions and services in England as well as other faiths and cultures in the wider community and the world. Overall, their experiences contribute to pupils' longer-term economic and general well-being.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The quality of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. Pupils say that they feel well cared for and safe at school. Welfare procedures are guided by a full range of policies designed to ensure good practice. They are supported by guidance from the parent company. Pupils are encouraged to be healthy; they are provided with an appropriate diet which includes fruit at lunchtime and take part in a wide range of sporting activities. Policies, such as those relating to bullying and behaviour, reflect detailed consideration and the school's aim of providing a harmonious learning environment. Training for staff, who take responsibility for

aspects of welfare, including child protection, has been undertaken appropriately. The latest risk assessment completed on behalf of the school reflects a thorough analysis of risk in the context of the old and complex building. Despite the complexities of the accommodation and its status as a listed building, the school demonstrates its commitment to meeting its responsibility to maximising access. A suitable policy has been established in relation to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has clearly established strategies for the recruitment of staff and the completion of the necessary checks to ensure their suitability to work with children. These are well documented in most respects but the single central register of checks undertaken is not yet complete.

School's premises and accommodation

The school is housed in elegant old buildings which have been modified for use as a school over a number of years. They are maintained in good condition and decorative order and provide suitable and safe accommodation for learning and a range of sporting activities. Classrooms are all of good size and importantly enable teachers to use a range of strategies to support pupils' learning. Specialist rooms are set aside for information and communication technology, science, art, music and drama and there is a school library.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

A very good range of information is available which supports good communications with parents. Information about the school, its curriculum and the required policies are provided through the prospectus, the helpful website and leaflets containing information on specific aspects of the provision. The school provides three reports each year and opportunities for parents to meet teachers. Presentation evenings have been helpful to parents in explaining developments relating to school policy on assessment and bullying.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has clear strategies for handling complaints. These meet requirements and are made available to parents.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

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

- develop the register of checks undertaken to include evidence of those undertaken on proprietors (paragraph 4C(6 and 7)).

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:

- to continue the process of embedding assessment strategies to support teaching and learning
- to ensure that learning 'targets' are used effectively as part of this development, and that pupils, in particular the oldest, understand their nature and use
- to review the use of computers in classrooms and to extend their use where relevant to learning.

School details

Name of school	Akeley Wood Junior School
DCSF number	928/6045
Unique reference number	122138
Type of school	Primary
Status	Independent
Date school opened	1988
Age range of pupils	1–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 112 Girls: 103 Total: 215
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,855-£8,505
Address of school	Wicken Park Wicken Milton Keynes Buckinghamshire MK19 6DA
Telephone number	01908 571231
Fax number	01908 265726
Email address	Linda.hayes@akeleywoodjunior.co.uk
Headteacher	Mrs Linda Hayes
Proprietor	Cognita
Reporting inspector	Michael Thirkell
Dates of inspection	1–2 July 2008