

Ashbridge Independent School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	888/6027
Unique Reference Number	119854
URN for registered childcare	EY286886
Inspection number	331350
Inspection dates	5 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Martin Newell

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). The inspection of childcare was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.

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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. The inspection of registered provision¹ was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.

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

Ashbridge School continues to grow in size although classes remain small. The number on roll in the extensive Nursery department has seen particular expansion. The school caters for children and pupils between the age of 0 and 11 years. There are currently 129 children in the 0-3 registered childcare provision. 199 part-time children are on roll and 110 full-time pupils. The school was opened in 1995 and is housed in excellent accommodation set in extensive and highly attractive grounds in Hutton, close to Preston in Lancashire. The school aims to provide high quality care and education supported by continuity of learning for all children in a first class environment. The school was last inspected in September 2006.

Evaluation of the school

Ashbridge Independent School provides a good quality of education for all its pupils. Some aspects of its work are outstanding. The good progress and achievement that is evident across the school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, owes much to the good and at times outstanding teaching and a vibrant and exciting curriculum. Pupils contribute significantly to helping make Ashbridge the success story it is. Their excellent behaviour, outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and infectious enthusiasm all help to create a learning environment where individuals flourish. The school is led in a highly effective manner by a committed, creative and innovative senior leadership team who constantly drive the school forward in pursuit of excellence and who ensure the welfare of pupils is afforded the highest priority. The points for development listed in the last report have been addressed and the school fully complies with the regulations for independent schools. Parents rightly express a very high level of satisfaction with the school.

¹ Schools which provide childcare for children from birth until the term in which they reach their third birthday must register this provision separately with Ofsted.

Quality of education

The good quality of the curriculum adds much to pupils' enjoyment of school and ensures that all pupils make good progress and achieve well. Children get off to a flying start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and this is systematically built on as they move through the school. Standards by the time that pupils leave school are consistently well above the national average. The good provision that is made for both those pupils with learning difficulties and more able pupils means that all pupils achieve equally well. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls because the school has been successful in improving the writing standards of boys.

The school is forward looking and innovative and this is reflected in the vibrant curriculum on offer. The school puts much emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills and there is a creative edge to the curriculum that brings an added zest to learning. The use of specialist teachers in areas such as music and drama helps pupils to become confident and accomplished performers. The many opportunities to participate in physical activities reinforce the importance of pupils developing healthy lifestyle habits. Pupils learn a foreign language and many are given the opportunity to play a musical instrument. The school's participation in the Forest Schools' initiative provides exciting opportunities for pupils to learn much about the world around them and to develop a deeper understanding of conservation and ecological issues. The school is always seeking to make learning more relevant and exciting. A good start has already been made in how pupils' writing and other key skills can be developed across different subjects. The school is rightly seeking to take this further by planning for the systematic development of pupils' literacy, numeracy, enquiry, investigative and computer skills through cross-curricular work and other curriculum projects. This blueprint for a successful curriculum is made complete by a wide array of enrichment activities. These include many visits, visitors, residential trips and after school clubs that range from karate to gardening. The accommodation and grounds are stunning and are used in an excellent manner to enthuse pupils and bring learning to life.

The quality of teaching and assessment overall, including that in the Early Years Foundation Stage, is good. Some practice is outstanding. Teachers plan well and, in most instances, work is well matched to the range of abilities of the pupils. Just occasionally the challenge is not high enough for the more able pupils. Relationships in lessons are often excellent and there is a real hub of activity and enjoyment. Many lessons have good pace and the right balance is struck between listening to the teacher and giving pupils time to complete tasks that are set. When time allocated to individual lessons is too long, the pace of learning drops a little. All teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards to engage and maintain pupils' interest and to make clear and valid teaching points. When teaching is outstanding, for example, in a Year 5/6 lesson, expectations are very high, questioning is incisive and pupils justify their views and opinions using expressive and persuasive language. In such circumstances pupils readily rise to the challenges set. Across the school teachers go the extra mile in building up pupils' confidence and self-esteem so that they are

always ready to take part because they know their contributions will be valued. The quality of teaching is monitored on a regular basis by the headteacher and other senior staff. This has proved to be an effective strategy in ensuring improvements in teaching and also in the sharing and dissemination of good practice.

Good procedures are in place for assessing pupils' attainment. This is done in a number of ways. As well as national tests and optional end of year assessments, pupils' reading and spelling ages are tested on a regular basis. Assessments are carried out at the end of units studied in different subjects. There are also some very good examples of the marking of pupils' work, which makes crystal clear why a piece of work is good or what is needed to improve. This strong practice is more evident in English than in other subjects but discussions with pupils indicate that they value the constructive comments and that they are only too ready to take them on board. Discussions also indicate that pupils have a good awareness of their individual targets in English and mathematics. Older pupils have a strong grasp of the National Curriculum levels they are working at and are actively involved in setting their own targets. The school has rightly identified the need to further collate assessment information in a more organised manner so that the tracking of pupils' progress as they move through school is even more effective and any dips in progress continue to be quickly identified and then addressed.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils thoroughly enjoy all that the school offers both during and after the school day. They have an infectious enthusiasm and participate in activities with gusto. They are highly motivated and keen to do well and all these factors are reflected in the well above average attendance rates. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They are extremely polite and courteous. They are articulate and highly confident individuals who show great maturity and self-discipline and seldom step over the mark. Older pupils show genuine affection for younger children and look out for them. There is little doubt that pupils make a telling contribution to a learning environment that exudes a sense of caring and strong family and community ethos.

Pupils have an excellent awareness of the beauty of the world around them and value it greatly. They have a very strong sense of justice and fair play and a deep rooted empathy for those less fortunate than themselves. A sense of tolerance and respect wraps around the school and this is heightened by an excellent awareness and understanding of differing faiths, traditions and cultures. Pupils are already aware of what is needed to be a good citizen and they make many contributions to the life of the school as a community through their roles as monitors, house and sports captains and school council and eco club members. Pupils also organise and participate in a number of charity and local community events. The academic skills that pupils acquire as they move through school, aligned to the excellent personal qualities, are key components in the well rounded individuals who leave the school more than ready to take on the next challenges in their lives.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The school provides excellent pastoral care for all pupils and this contributes significantly to the outstanding safeguarding of pupils' welfare, health and safety. Detailed risk assessments are regularly carried out for activities both on and off the school site. All staff undertake child protection training and follow designated procedures assiduously. A very high number of staff in school are paediatric trained first aiders. The procedures for recruiting staff and safeguarding pupils are fully compliant and a single central record is in place which confirms that all the necessary checks have been carried out. Excellent procedures are in place to induct new staff. Induction procedures for children starting at the school are very effective and the strong and effective links that have been forged with outside agencies, alongside the school's own outstanding internal mechanisms, mean that help is always on hand for pupils experiencing any difficulties.

Levels of supervision around the school are excellent and discussions with pupils indicate that they feel extremely safe and secure in school. Pupils always feel there is someone to talk or turn to if they have any worries or concerns whatsoever. Pupils feel proud to be a part of the Ashbridge community and feel that they have a voice that is listened to and respected. The individuality of pupils is recognised and celebrated and the school is highly successful at enabling pupils to follow healthy lives and give pupils an excellent grounding in what is needed to keep safe.

The school has appropriate awareness of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and fulfils its obligations in full.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is good with some outstanding features. Teaching is good and at times outstanding and contributes much to the progress that children of all ages make. Planning is very good and is geared well to providing an array of stimulating activities that meet the very differing needs of the children who are aged between 0 months and 5 years. Teaching is particularly good at developing the language, communication and social skills of children. Every opportunity is utilised to enhance early language skills and to getting children to do things for themselves. There are a large number of staff who all work together very well in helping children on their very different learning journeys. Staff are constantly assessing children's development, no matter how small the steps, and the best practice sees the information being used in an excellent manner to plan the next stages of development. The school recognises that this best practice needs disseminating more. Children's personal development is outstanding because children are already developing a sense of independence; behave extremely well and older children readily take turns, share resources and show high levels of concentration and perseverance when completing tasks. Procedures to ensure children's welfare and safety are excellent in every respect and are matched by an excellent commitment to healthy eating. The accommodation is outstanding and is rich in the quantity and quality of resources. The excellent outdoor accommodation is used

extensively and is a terrific learning resource. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. The senior leadership team has expanded considerably since the last inspection in line with the increased number of children on roll. The leadership team manage and develop staff extremely well, monitor the quality of teaching rigorously and have established excellent lines of communication and information to and from parents. They are always looking to be even better and have rightly identified the need to extend early Years practice into Year 1 for those children that would still benefit from such activities.

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:

- Collate all available assessment information, including that in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and organise it in the most effective way so that the progress of pupils as they move through the school can be more easily tracked and any possibility of underachievement continues to be addressed swiftly.

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	Ashbridge Independent School		
DCSF number	888/6027		
Unique reference number	119854		
EY URN (for registered childcare only)	Ey286886		
Type of school	Primary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1995		
Age range of pupils	0-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed/Boys/Girls		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 58	Girls: 52	Total: 110
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 104	Girls: 95	Total: 199
Number of pupils aged 0-3 in registered childcare provision	Boys:66	Girls:63	Total:129
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6006		
Annual fees (childcare)	£10,140		
Address of school	Lindle Lane Hutton Preston Lancashire PR4 4AQ		
Telephone number	01772619900		
Fax number	01772619900		
Email address	head@ashbridgeschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Hilary Sharples		
Proprietor	Ashbridge School and Nursery Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Martin Newell		
Dates of inspection	5 June 2009		