

Hydesville Tower School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	335/6007
Unique Reference Number	104266
Inspection number	332441
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Mark Mumby 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

Hydesville Tower School is an independent day school for boys and girls aged 3 – 16 years. It is located in Walsall in the West Midlands. The school has been owned by Cognita Schools Ltd since March 2005. Although the school is not selective, prospective pupils undertake assessments to ensure their suitability before being offered a place.

The school aims, *'to provide an enriched education of the highest possible quality by recognising each child as an individual, by ensuring that class size is small enough for the individual to be noticed, and by encouraging the fullest development of each child's abilities'*.

The school is registered for 380 pupils and there are currently 362 full time pupils on roll. 51 pupils are funded through the government nursery scheme. The school provides before and after school care for its pupils. The school opened in 1952 and this is the first published inspection report for the school by Ofsted. The provision for children in Reception and Nursery was previously inspected by Ofsted in June 2008.

Evaluation of the school

Hydesville Tower School provides a good standard of education for pupils throughout the school including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They make good progress and achieve high standards at GCSE. Pupils' behaviour and their personal development are exemplary. As one parent wrote, *'...children are allowed and encouraged to develop into sensible young people'*. Although most aspects of pupils' welfare are carefully attended to, attention to some procedures and aspects of routine maintenance has not been sufficiently robust. The school meets virtually all of the requirements for registration.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of all pupils well, including those with learning difficulties and those in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils benefit from a good breadth of subjects and experiences augmented by a comprehensive range of extra-curricular activities. These include engagement with the 'Chef of the Year' competition as well as involvement in the local travel plan where the school

works in partnership with the local authority, local schools and charities. The strong creative and musical curriculum is also enriched through the extra-curricular programme. The school is aware that the quality of planning is variable and is taking steps to rectify this. Pupils are well prepared to enter the school of their choice at the end of Years 6 and 11 and also receive a programme of careers guidance in Year 11 where good use is made of external support including Connexions. Information and communication technology (ICT) provision supports a GCSE examination course in senior school, but is insufficiently resourced elsewhere to effectively support learning across the curriculum. Personal, social and health education does not have timetabled lessons, but is taught effectively throughout the curriculum and through a programme of senior and junior school assemblies.

Teaching and assessment are consistently good throughout the school and pupils make good progress. The standards attained by pupils in assessments in Year 6 and in GCSE examinations are high. They benefit from small teaching groups and appreciate the high level of individual support that they receive. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and relate very well to their teachers. The teachers know the pupils well and use assessment effectively to plan learning activities which both interest pupils and provide a good level of challenge for all of them, including those with learning difficulties. Teachers pay very good attention to ensuring equality in lessons, treating all pupils equally regardless of gender or background. Throughout lessons, teachers use questioning skilfully, frequently targeting questions carefully to assess learning of individual pupils and develop understanding. They frequently elicit extended responses from pupils and these responses help to develop learning for the whole group. The use of specialist teachers throughout the school is a particular strength, with pupils benefiting from their very good subject knowledge. The available resources are used well to help pupils learn. However, other than in the Early Years Foundation Stage, resources are only just adequate. Resources for teaching ICT and science are particularly limited.

On the few occasions when pupils make less progress, this is frequently the result of over-enthusiasm by teachers who then dominate the lesson. Consequently, opportunities to draw on pupils' own ideas are missed and pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to think and reflect on their learning. The marking of pupils' work provides them with a good understanding about how well they have done. However, it rarely provides guidance to help pupils improve their work. The most helpful marking is usually in English where pupils are often shown the next steps they need to take. Consequently this improves their rate of progress.

There is a clear framework in place to assess pupils' attainment at different points in their school life. This information is used effectively to ensure that support is well-targeted and no pupil falls behind in their learning. The school's current work to develop a system to track the progress of each pupil is a sensible initiative.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Staff place the highest importance on developing pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Consequently, pupils have very good attitudes to learning. They take great pride in their achievements and work hard to gain commendation certificates. Pupils' enjoyment is reflected in their good attendance and the enthusiasm they show when they arrive each morning and during lessons. Every opportunity is taken to enable pupils to understand and respect the viewpoints of other people. Consequently, the school is very successful in promoting harmony between pupils and families from wide ranging backgrounds, cultures and religions. The resulting welcoming school community fosters attitudes of consideration and tolerance. It is a place where pupils of all ages are valued as individuals and treated with dignity and respect. Pupils are thoughtful and considerate, taking responsibility for their own actions. Their behaviour is outstanding. Pupils have excellent relationships with one another and older pupils willingly help younger ones. They take advantage of the many opportunities presented to grow in self-confidence and develop maturity and independence. The members of the senior school council take their roles seriously and demonstrate their ability to represent and articulate the views of their peers. This gives these pupils good opportunities to participate in decision making and be involved in the running of the school.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. Although the school believes it is better than this, it is not because too many procedures are not robust enough. For example, the risk assessments for activities away from the school site are not consistently carried out with sufficient rigour. The school has prepared detailed and accurate risk assessments for physical education activities and planned well to minimise risks. However, risk assessments for other visits are not detailed enough to ensure that all risks have been adequately considered. Although the school has robust procedures for many aspects of health and safety including testing of electrical and fire safety equipment, there are still some important maintenance issues that have not been addressed. These include missing protective covers on some fluorescent lights and upper floor windows that are neither restrained nor fitted with safety glass. The school's procedures for child protection and first aid are robust and members of staff have been trained to the required standards.

Pupils of all ages feel safe in school. As one senior pupil said, '...it's fun, safe and teachers care about you.' They are frequently reminded about health and safety issues during lessons and behave very sensibly. Pupils say there is no bullying in school and that they are confident that adults will support them if they are worried about something. Pupils have a good understanding about how to lead healthy lifestyles. They benefit from a good amount of exercise through physical education activities, although many pupils choose to bring in unhealthy snacks to eat at break times.

The school has planned well to increase accessibility and will be drawing up a plan to review the possibility of further improving access.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school fully complies with the regulations relating to the checks it makes on prospective employees and volunteers regarding their identity, qualifications, medical fitness and suitability to work with children.

School's premises and accommodation

The school is housed in a series of buildings on one site. These buildings have been suitably adapted to provide adequate accommodation. However, on-site facilities for science, physical education and ICT are limited. Good use is made of the nearby arboretum, sports facilities at Wolverhampton University and a local swimming pool to enhance the provision for physical education. Although the school has sufficient toilet facilities, it does not meet the requirement to provide shower facilities for all of the senior pupils.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides suitable opportunities to consult with parents twice a year. Parents receive at least one written report each year which provides them with a clear overview of their child's progress. Additional information about attainment and effort is provided for parents through report cards which are sent home at least each term. The school has recently updated its prospectus and it now fulfils all of the requirements.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a clearly written complaints procedure which meets the requirements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision for the learning and development of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The curricular provision is interesting, varied and closely linked to the six early learning goals. Teaching is good and the staff promote excellent relationships. The children make at least good progress in all areas relative to their starting points and capabilities. Progress in personal, social and emotional development is outstanding as is the children's progress in handwriting.

Planning is suitable overall, but there is insufficient detail in the planning for the termly topics to enable senior managers to ensure that all areas of the curriculum

are adequately covered. The school recognises this and is taking appropriate steps to remedy the situation. Assessment procedures are satisfactory and include standardised tests.

The space for outdoor play is adequate and is used effectively. This aspect of the provision has improved since the last inspection in June 2008.

The welfare, health and safety of the children are satisfactory. However, risk assessments for out of school visits do not always assess risks accurately. Other procedures for the children's welfare, health and safety are thorough. All staff have had relevant first aid training.

Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. The two managers work well together and liaise effectively. Plans are already in place to further improve curriculum planning. Staff ensure that the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good.

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 provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- ensure that the school's written policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school has regard to DCSF guidance Health and safety of pupils on educational visits (reference HSPV2) and is fully implemented by carrying out thorough risk assessments for all school visits (paragraph 3(2)(c))
- have full regard to the DCSF guidance Health and safety: responsibilities and powers (DCSF 0803/2001) by ensuring that all aspects of the school buildings and environment are free from significant hazards (paragraph 3(4)).

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

- provide shower facilities for all senior pupils (paragraph 5(k)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- make more effective use of marking to inform pupils about how they can improve their work

- improve the current topic planning in the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure it provides clear guidance to ensure all aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum are suitably planned for.

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	Hydesville Tower School		
DCSF number	335/6007		
Unique reference number	104266		
Type of school	Primary and secondary day		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1952		
Age range of pupils	3-16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 208	Girls: 154	Total: 362
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5250 - £9135		
Address of school	23-31 Broadway North Walsall West Midlands WS1 2QG		
Telephone number	01922 624374		
Fax number	01922 746169		
Email address	headmaster@hydesville.com		
Headteacher	Dr L Fox		
Proprietor	Cognita Schools Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Mark Mumby HMI		
Dates of inspection	10–11 February 2009		