

Ashbrooke House School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	802/6004
Unique Reference Number	109364
URN for registered childcare	EY255728
Inspection number	341931
Inspection dates	30 June–1 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Mark Lindfield HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended. 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, 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.

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

Information about the school

Ashbrooke House School is an independent day school for boys and girls aged 3 -11 years. The school lies in a residential area of Weston-super-Mare, located in a large Victorian House and was founded in 1953. The school currently has 87 pupils on roll; of these 11 are part time. The school's Early Years Foundation Stage comprises 14 children who receive nursery education funding and in addition there are nine children in the Reception class. The school provides an after school session for up to 10 children. The school was previously inspected in January 2007.

The school aims to '*provide a happy and caring school through a broad and balanced curriculum*'.

Evaluation of the school

Ashbrooke House School provides a satisfactory quality of education. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Since the last inspection the school has responded well to ensure that it now complies with all of the regulations. It has maintained its distinctive family atmosphere; pupils are happy, well motivated and achieve well. Parents are supportive of the school; the majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire reported that they are completely happy with the school.

Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory. All subjects of the National Curriculum are included as well as French and German at Key Stage 2. Specialist teachers for subjects such as modern foreign languages, sports, music and information and communication technology provide secure knowledge and understanding in these subjects. The

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.

curriculum is satisfactory because of its impact on pupils' academic progress, which is satisfactory. Planning does not provide effectively for pupils at all levels of attainment to make good progress. There are policies or schemes of work for each subject which now include personal, social and emotional health, but these are not always detailed enough to ensure that skills, knowledge and understanding are progressively developed as pupils move through the school. Otherwise, the curriculum provides good levels of interest and enjoyment through a wide range of visits and visitors and extra-curricular activities that are effective in supporting pupils' learning.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory overall with some clear strengths in specialist subject teaching. A full time teaching commitment hampers the headteacher's opportunities to provide guidance and actively promote the quality of teaching.

Lessons throughout the school are conducted in a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Relationships between pupils and staff are good and this accounts, in part, for the progress made by pupils. They feel confident enough to be able to ask questions about anything they do not understand and their positive attitudes in lessons enhance the rate at which they progress. Where the quality of teaching is good, teachers' planning clearly identifies what the pupils will learn and builds incrementally on their knowledge and at a good pace. Where the quality of teaching is satisfactory there is an over reliance on worksheets and teacher directed activities and too few opportunities exist for pupils to apply their skills and work independently at their own levels. When these opportunities are provided, as in the weekly mathematical investigations for pupils in Years 3 to 6, their rate of progress improves.

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and by the time they leave the Reception class all pupils are working securely within national expectations and the majority exceed them. Pupils then go on to achieve well in reading and science by the time they leave in Year 6, whilst standards in writing are lower than other subjects at all levels. In mathematics the majority of pupils in Year 6 achieve well but when compared with other subjects, few of the more able pupils go on to achieve the higher levels. Overall this represents satisfactory progress from pupils' good starting points and enables pupils to gain a place at the secondary school of their choice at age 11. The headteacher has overseen the introduction of more regular assessment of pupils' performance to more closely monitor the quality and rate of their progress. Marking of pupils' work is regularly carried out; but this rarely includes comments that enable pupils to focus on making the required improvements. The school recognises that assessment in lessons and of pupils' work does not consistently help teachers to pinpoint the next steps in pupils' learning, so that they can adapt their teaching accordingly and provide suitable challenge for pupils.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and has improved since the last inspection. This agrees with the school's own judgement. The school's warm family ethos promotes effectively pupils' personal development, self-confidence and self-esteem. They know right from wrong and have a clear understanding of their teachers' expectations in terms of their behaviour and attitudes, which are both good. Pupils confirm that lessons are rarely interrupted and that they enjoy playtimes where they play happily together. Should anything ever concern them they all know who to go to for help and are confident that problems will be sorted out quickly and effectively.

Pupils enjoy school and they are satisfactorily prepared for their future economic well-being. They like the good range of sports, opportunities to perform, the interesting visits and visitors. Pupils' attendance is good and pupils arrive in good time for the beginning of the school day. Pupils relate to and support each other well, working and playing together cooperatively. Pupils make a positive contribution to the school and to local community events. Visiting speakers ensure that pupils understand their roles and responsibilities in the wider community. Pupils entertain musically, singing in local care homes and are active in fund raising for local charities and those further a field. The school also promotes cultural harmony effectively through cross curricular studies of a variety of cultures and celebrations of different festivals. They also make good use of the different cultural backgrounds of pupils in the school through assembly presentations, which are effective in raising pupils' multicultural awareness to good levels.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school has made several improvements to this area since the last inspection and consequently the provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety including those children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, is now good. Pupils are looked after well in a safe and healthy environment. Staff show good levels of concern for the well-being of pupils. Policies to safeguard pupils are in place and used effectively to protect their welfare. All staff receive appropriate training on child protection issues. Risk assessment processes are implemented during school visits and in changes to normal routines, as in the recent case when pet rats were brought to school.

Pupils indicate that they feel safe and well looked after and are clear that adults will listen to them and provide help where necessary. Parents unanimously feel that their children are safe. The school promotes pupils' health through daily, healthy snacks, the Fairtrade shop and their encouragement of nutritious packed lunches and good access to drinking water. The school grounds and the provision of good playground equipment encourage physical exercise. The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 and has implemented physical changes to the school facilities within a three year plan.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has introduced checks for medical fitness as part of their recruitment procedures and this now ensures that all appropriate checks are in place for the proprietors and staff. These comply with the safeguarding requirements and are recorded on a single central record.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises are well decorated and kept clean and well maintained. The displays of pupils' work around the school create a bright and welcoming environment. The space for the Early Years Foundation Stage, although restricted in some classes, is adequate for the current numbers but there is a lack of suitable all weather facilities. Older pupils have good access to hard play and grass areas which allows pupils of all ages to play freely together. The school provides appropriately supervised facilities for pupils who are ill whilst they await collection by their parents or family members.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides suitable opportunities to consult with parents twice a year. Parents receive two written reports each year which provide them with a clear overview of their child's progress. Other information about the school and events is available on the school's website, prospectus and through regular newsletters. The school has updated its prospectus and it now fulfils all of the requirements.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's written procedures for handling complaints are clear and fair. These comply with regulations and there have been no formal complaints this year.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and children make good progress. Many exceed the goals nationally expected by the end of the Reception Year. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The joint leaders are enthusiastic and have created strong teamwork between the Nursery and Reception staff. They show a thorough understanding of how young children learn, gained through past experience and professional development. All adults who work in the Early Years Foundation Stage have a consistent approach to teaching children and a high level of concern for the well-being of all. Through ongoing monitoring and evaluation of children's progress and achievements, staff have a clear view of the next steps they need to take to improve the provision further.

The range of learning activities is good and there are many opportunities for children to learn through play. Learning is meaningful and enjoyable through linking areas of

learning under topic headings. Nursery staff and the Reception teacher plan together so that children do not repeat work unnecessarily. Planning is carefully implemented so that all children experience a good balance across all areas of learning. However there is no covered outdoor area, so learning beyond the classroom is largely dependent on the weather, limiting opportunities for children to learn and develop. Early Years Foundation Stage staff are aware of this shortcoming and would like to be able to organise an outside classroom offering the same quality of learning opportunities as it does indoors.

Children are well cared for in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff keep good assessment records and the process to track children's progress is effective in providing adults with a clear understanding of children's attainment. They use this information well to plan the next steps of learning for individuals. Achievement is good because expectations are high and lessons are conducted at a brisk pace. Children's personal development, including their behaviour is outstanding, they are very happy, clearly enjoy their time in school, cooperate well and treat all others with courtesy and respect.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ("the Regulations").

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Ensure that teachers' short term planning is sufficiently detailed to include the precise learning that will take place for pupils of different attainment.
- Use daily assessments to pinpoint the steps pupils have taken in their learning so that subsequent lessons can be adapted accordingly.
- Provide the headteacher with regular opportunities to actively monitor teaching and the progress made by pupils.
- Provide suitable outdoor learning facilities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that the quality of learning outdoors matches that of indoors.

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	Ashbrooke House School		
DCSF number	802/6004		
Unique reference number	109364		
EY URN	255728		
Type of school	Preparatory		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1953		
Age range of pupils	3–11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 32	Girls: 44	Total: 76
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 7	Girls: 4	Total: 11
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3231		
Address of school	9 Ellenborough Park North Weston-super-Mare BS23 1XH		
Telephone number	01934 629515		
Fax number	01934 629515		
Email address	headteacher@ashbrookehouse.n-somerset.sch.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Ruth Thomas		
Proprietor	Mr John Teasdale		
Reporting inspector	Mark Lindfield HMI		
Dates of inspection	30 June–1 July 2009		