

Downsend School Leatherhead Lodge

Independent school inspection report

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| DCSF registration number | 936/6435 |
| Unique reference number | 125405 |
| URN for registered childcare | EY 307900 |
| Inspection number | 341938 |
| Inspection dates | 9 December 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Anne Duffy HMI |

Age group: 2–6

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002¹, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², 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 provision³ was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.⁴

This was a light-touch inspection 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

Downsend School Leatherhead Lodge is a co-educational pre-preparatory school for children aged from two to six years. The school was originally called The Rowans, founded in 1952. In 1988 it became one of the Downsend group of four schools owned by Cognita Schools Ltd. The school consists of the Early Years Foundation Stage (First and Second Steps Nursery, and Reception) and the first year of Key Stage 1. The majority of children who attend are in the Early Years Foundation Stage. At the time of the inspection there were 60 full-time and 42 part-time children on roll, of whom 55 were funded under the Nursery Education Grant. The school has registered day care which operates from 8am to 5.30pm in term time and is open in the holidays, for children from two to five years of age, for 'holiday fun'. The school aims to 'create a rich, colourful and stimulating environment where a child can experience success and develop a love of learning'. The school was last inspected in January 2007 when it met all but three of the independent school regulations.

Evaluation of the school

Downsend School Leatherhead Lodge meets its aims exceptionally well. The quality of education provided, in both the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1, is outstanding. Within a vibrant and positive atmosphere, children develop confidence and are keen to learn. 'I like school the most', stated one little boy. Curricular provision is outstanding, as are teaching and assessment overall, so that children make outstanding progress. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

³ 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.

⁴ www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2006/ukpga_20060021_en_4#pt3-ch2-pb4-l1g49

development is outstanding and arrangements for safeguarding and for ensuring their welfare, health and safety are good.

The school has addressed effectively the unmet regulations and suggested points for development which arose from the last inspection. The school meets all of the regulatory requirements for independent schools and all but one of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Quality of education

The quality of the education and of the curriculum provided is outstanding from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards. The curriculum matches the needs of the children extremely well and includes all the subject areas of the National Curriculum. Planning is very thorough and ensures the clear progression of learning from the Early Years Foundation Stage to the end of Year 1. Children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning in the Junior School, which starts at Year 2.

Throughout the school a strong and successful emphasis is placed on developing children's speaking and listening skills. The curriculum is enhanced by the use of specialist teachers for music, French, dance, drama and swimming in all classes, including the Nursery. It is enriched by a range of visits to support children's learning. For example, Year 1 children go to the Brighton Toy Museum, and also visit Littlehampton, where they observe the way seaside resorts have changed. Children also make use of the local environment when they go searching for wildlife. This clearly has a strong impact, as a parent described her nursery-aged son explaining to her in detail how tadpoles become frogs, and caterpillars become butterflies.

Since the last inspection the school has significantly improved its provision for information and communication technology (ICT). This means that all Year 1 children have access to computers and acquire the appropriate ICT skills, both in discrete lessons and through topic work. Younger children also use computers with increasing confidence. The school is aware of the different stages of the code of practice in making provision for any children whom staff feel may have special educational needs. The before- and after-school provision is valued by parents. The provision after school offers a wider range of activity than that available to children in the early mornings, but children take part in both sessions happily.

After making outstanding progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make similarly outstanding progress as they move through Year 1. By the time they leave they achieve very high standards. The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding overall. Teachers are enthusiastic and have high expectations of their class. They succeed in making learning interesting and fun. A number of Year 1 children said how much they enjoyed writing. Pupils take an active part in lessons and are encouraged to work in small groups and in pairs. Teachers build on the solid foundations acquired in the Early Years Foundation Stage with regular and rigorous

teaching of phonics. Lessons are planned carefully and move at a brisk pace. Pupils are encouraged to contribute to discussions as well as listen attentively to others. Expectations of their writing are particularly high and many pupils write at length. This was exemplified in recent work where pupils retold the story of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'. In a Year 1 classroom the displays consist almost entirely of pupils' writing. Teachers vary their expectations according to pupils' ability, but occasionally they do not plan sufficient variety in the activities, particularly for the less able. Teaching assistants are very supportive and give strong guidance and encouragement to pupils. There are excellent relationships between teachers and pupils and between the pupils themselves.

The assessment of pupils' learning is good. Pupils' work is marked regularly and they are told how they can improve their work. The progress and attainment of pupils after they leave the Early Years Foundation Stage are assessed through standardised testing in reading, writing and mathematics. Tracking records for the two key stages are currently kept separately so that demonstrating children's progress throughout their time at the school is not as straightforward as it might be.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children is outstanding, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The children enjoy school a great deal. Their enjoyment is shown in their excellent attendance and positive attitudes. From the youngest age they demonstrate that they are learning about the difference between right and wrong. Although a very small minority of parents expressed concern about incidents of aggressive behaviour from one or two children, inspectors observed consistently outstanding behaviour for children of this age. From the very early stages children develop independence. They are able to help each other and respond well to the praise and encouragement provided by all staff, which helps them to try new challenges.

Children take an active and enthusiastic part in school life; during the week of the inspection some had helped the headteacher to make a menorah for an assembly about Hanukkah. They evidently enjoy being monitors, taking messages and being responsible for taking the register to the office. In the wider community they participate readily in local events, such as singing carols, and contribute harvest gifts for the local night hostel. They enjoy opportunities to fund raise successfully through events such as sponsored walks and non-uniform days.

There is a good range of visits and visiting speakers. Recently these have included a visit from members of the Royal National Lifeboat Institute and visits to the National Gallery. Inspectors observed children making good use of role play to post their Christmas cards in the 'Post Office'. Through these experiences children are helped to understand the types and roles of public services and institutions in England. There is excellent provision to raise awareness of other countries and lifestyles. At the time of the inspection, although the school was embracing the theme of

Christmas, assemblies explored all religions which celebrate festivals of light. In this way children learn about customs and practices from different parts of the world. They are successfully encouraged to celebrate difference and diversity and, as a result, learn that they live in a diverse society and to respect other cultures within a very harmonious atmosphere.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good from the day they enter the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is acknowledged by a comment from one parent who wrote, 'Staff are genuinely concerned for the well-being of my child.' Detailed policies and procedures are in place to safeguard pupils' safety and welfare, including the required training on child protection and the safe recruitment of staff. There is a comprehensive policy in place to promote good behaviour and prevent bullying. Although clear about what happens if anyone is naughty, when asked what would happen to someone who was being a bully, children, said, 'We can't answer that because we don't really have any bullies.'

Pupils are confident and open in their relationships with each other and with staff. The quality of supervision is extremely good and pupils feel safe. There are ample opportunities both on and off the site for pupils to take part in outdoor exercise and they make good use of these. Relaxed and well-supervised meal times steer pupils well towards a healthy and balanced diet, and staff deal sensitively with any particular needs or preferences. Fire procedures and risk assessments for educational visits are employed well. First aid policies and procedures, and those for administering medicine, generally meet the regulations. The school has robust procedures for storing and administering prescribed medicine. However, written records of all prescribed medicine given, while shared with parents on a day-to-day basis, are not retained in a way that is fully consistent with the practice guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The school has developed an accessibility plan which complies with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the setting is outstanding. Children thoroughly enjoy their time in the Nursery and Reception classes and demonstrate outstanding achievement by the time they transfer to Year 1. They quickly develop independence and self-confidence because staff provide appropriate guidance without taking over any task which the children are able to attempt themselves. Children from different backgrounds play and learn very happily together, are aware of each other's contributions, and are friendly and welcoming. Their behaviour is generally outstanding and they are keen to learn, showing excellent skills in numeracy and literacy and a strong awareness of the world around them. The teaching of French

enhances their language development very successfully. Children develop an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe and move sensibly around the school. They learn to adopt healthy lifestyles and understand when to wash their hands and when to wear coats or boots to go outside. Great care is taken to encourage them to eat a balanced diet and take regular exercise.

The quality of provision in the setting is outstanding. Children's welfare has a high priority. Apart from one slight lapse in protocol with regard to recording medicines, children's safety and well-being are promoted exceptionally well within very attractive and stimulating learning environments. Teaching is outstanding overall, if slightly less varied for older children than in the earlier stages. Provision for outdoor learning is extensive and teachers ensure that it is incorporated very well into children's daily experiences, particularly in the Nursery.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Since the last inspection, planning and assessment has improved and there are increased opportunities for staff to plan together. The school makes very good use of early years partners to monitor and constantly improve its practice, with evident impact.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

In order to comply with the welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage the school must:

- maintain in school written records of all medicines administered to children.

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:

- Extend the range of tasks and activities included in lessons for the older children, particularly the less able, to ensure that the learning needs of individuals are met as fully as possible.
- Join the tracking of children's progress in Year 1 and the Early Years Foundation Stage in a way that more securely demonstrates the long-term progress made during their time at the school.

Inspection judgement recording form

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|-------------|------|--------------|------------|
| outstanding | good | satisfactory | inadequate |
|-------------|------|--------------|------------|

The quality of education

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|--|---|--|--|--|
| 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 | | ✓ | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|

The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

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|---|---|--|--|--|
| How good are the outcomes for children in the EYFS? | ✓ | | | |
| What is the quality of provision in the EYFS? | ✓ | | | |
| How effectively is the EYFS led and managed? | ✓ | | | |
| Overall effectiveness: how well does the school meet the needs of children in the EYFS? | ✓ | | | |

School details

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| Name of school | Downsend School Leatherhead Lodge | | |
| DCSF number | 936/6435 | | |
| Unique reference number | 125405 | | |
| EY URN (for registered childcare only) | 307900 | | |
| Type of school | Pre-preparatory | | |
| Status | Independent | | |
| Date school opened | 1988 | | |
| Age range of pupils | 2–6 | | |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | | |
| Number on roll (full-time pupils) | Boys: 29 | Girls: 31 | Total: 60 |
| Number on roll (part-time pupils) | Boys: 24 | Girls: 18 | Total: 42 |
| Number of pupils aged 0-3 in registered childcare provision | Boys: 12 | Girls: 8 | Total: 20 |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £8,250 | | |
| Annual fees (childcare) | £1,513 | | |
| Address of school | 13 Epsom Road Leatherhead Surrey KT22 8ST | | |
| Telephone number | 01372 385437 | | |
| Fax number | 01372 376574 | | |
| Email address | leatherheadlodge@downsend.co.uk | | |
| Headteacher | Mrs Gill Brooks | | |
| Proprietor | Cognita | | |
| Reporting inspector | Anne Duffy HMI | | |
| Dates of inspection | 9 December 2009 | | |