

Athelstan House School

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number	3186060
Unique reference number	102941
Inspection number	341942
Inspection dates	23 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Elisabeth Linley HMI

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

Age group: 3-7

Published:

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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.¹

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

Athelstan House School is a non-selective independent pre-preparatory school. It opened in September 1979 and moved to its present site in Hampton, south west London, in 1985. The school admits girls and boys from the term in which they turn three years of age and they leave school at the age of seven. There are currently 37 pupils on roll including 11 children who are in receipt of nursery funding. Seven children attend on a part-time basis. There are no pupils who have a statement of special educational needs. However, a few pupils have identified learning needs and one child is in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The school was last inspected by Ofsted in January 2007.

The school considers every child to be special and it aims, *'to create a happy, caring and stimulating learning environment where each child feels valued and can develop to his or her full potential'*.

Evaluation of the school

Athelstan House School provides a good quality of education and successfully meets its aims. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Pupils in Key Stage 1 also benefit from a good curriculum and good quality teaching. The school is effective in its work to ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are in place while the provision of pastoral care is of a high standard. As a result, pupils' confidence and self-esteem develops well; their behaviour is outstanding and pupils make good progress in their learning. Athelstan House has improved since its last inspection and now meets all the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The school provides a good curriculum for its pupils throughout school, including for the children who attend the Early Years Foundation Stage. In Key Stage 1, the

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

curriculum covers all National Curriculum subjects and French for pupils in Year 2. It is planned appropriately using commercially produced schemes of work that are adapted to meet the pupils' needs. The staff place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy. In particular, the focus on literacy, with regular phonics lessons being provided during the week, aids those pupils who are new to English. These pupils benefit from the school's work to promote pupils' speaking and listening skills. The school also provides well for pupils who have been identified as needing additional support for their learning; pupils' individual education plans are good. Very good partnerships exist with parents and effective links are made with external agencies where additional provision is set in place to meet specific needs, for example speech therapy. One parent wrote that her child, 'had slight learning difficulties and the amount of extra support was phenomenal. It helped her to achieve her absolute best!'

Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is delivered through circle time while information and communication technology (ICT) is similarly covered in a weekly lesson. However, ICT is not used or taught consistently across the curriculum, and has been identified for further development by the school. The curriculum is enriched with opportunities for sport through planned lessons in physical education (PE) at the local church hall and weekly swimming lessons. The time management of the swimming lessons has improved since the last inspection and pupils are out of school for less time than they were. Sport England coaches also visit the school on a weekly basis and provide an after-school activity that is much enjoyed by the pupils.

Teaching and assessment are good. The ratio of staff to pupils is high and this contributes effectively to the individual attention that pupils receive. Relationships in school are very good and help to foster pupils' love of learning. In lessons, teachers are effective in their questioning and this enables pupils to think carefully about their work and to apply their skills to new tasks. This was evident in a Year 2 mathematics lesson. The pace of the lesson was brisk, no time was lost and very good use was made of the teaching assistants in the class. Teaching assistants throughout school work hard with the pupils and contribute significantly to their achievement. Even so, during the teachers' introduction to lessons, teaching assistants are not used as well as they could be to note pupils' responses or complete observational assessments. Assessment of pupils' progress has improved since the last inspection. Weekly targets that are shared with parents are set with the pupils to provide challenge and to help pupils know what they need to do to improve. Formal assessments are also carried out during the school year and the results show clearly that pupils make good progress from their different starting points. As a result, most pupils achieve above average standards in their reading, writing and mathematics.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils say that they enjoy school very much. One pupil wrote: 'I enjoy going to school, my teachers are kind and I have lots of friends'. It is no surprise therefore that their attendance is good. Pupils enjoy having responsibilities at school such as taking the register and helping to tidy the classroom. However, too few opportunities are currently provided for pupils to take on responsibilities in school and the staff do not regularly plan to find out pupils' views about their school. Nonetheless, in accordance with the school's aims of recognising that each child is 'special', individuals are made to feel valued and their success is celebrated. Pupils are encouraged to do their best at all times and to be kind to one another, for example in the school's work to support a local children's charity. They respond very well and develop in confidence showing very positive attitudes in all that they do. As a result, pupils play and work together well and respect each other's differences. They develop an understanding of people in the wider community, such as firemen and nurses who help them. They understand right from wrong and are mindful of the school rules; their behaviour is outstanding. As a consequence of their good personal development and the development of their good basic skills, pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their school life.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The school's provision for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. Procedures for child protection and the completion of appropriate checks on staff prior to their recruitment, comply with statutory requirements and are underpinned by effective policies and staff training. The high quality of pastoral care ensures that pupils are able to work and play in a safe and secure environment. Pupils say they feel safe in school and are happy to go to any member of staff if they need help. The school's fire safety procedures are thorough and up-to-date fire risk assessments, identified at the last inspection for action, have now been carried out. Similarly, the rigour of procedures when preparing and serving food, identified for improvement, have now been implemented. Indeed, lunchtime and the healthy food prepared are much enjoyed by the pupils. They are clear about the importance of eating food such as fruit and vegetables and know the importance of exercise, such as they enjoy during their swimming and PE lessons.

The school meets all requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Parents speak highly of the good quality provision which is effective in meeting the needs of their children. They appreciate the very high ratio of staff to children as a result of which they receive a good level of care and personal attention. The children also benefit from a well-planned range of learning opportunities that is supported by a good balance of child-initiated and teacher-led activities. This was seen when

children decided what others must do to reflect the number thrown on a dice, either to collect five things or make four jumps. In such activities, children learn to cooperate well in small groups and to develop their independence. Most children make good progress towards the early learning goals in relation to their starting points. They demonstrate good understanding and can explain what they are doing and why they have chosen an activity. Children from different backgrounds and cultures play well together. They are encouraged in healthy lifestyles and take regular exercise. Good use is made of the well-equipped outdoor play area for free-flow play activities. However, the play surface for the youngest children is uneven and plans are in place for its resurfacing. The staff are good at making informal assessments of the children's learning and recording them with the use of photographs to illustrate the children's progress. However, observations do not currently include opportunities to assess children's individual learning during teacher-led activities. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed and areas for improvement are identified in their self-evaluation.

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 the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- improve the use of teaching assistants during the teachers' introductions to lessons and, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, extend observations to assess children's individual learning during teacher-led activities
- extend the use of ICT across the curriculum and ensure the consistency of its teaching
- implement the planned resurfacing of the youngest children's outdoor play area.

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 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?		✓		

The quality of boarding provision *(leave blank if not applicable)*

Evaluation of boarding provision				
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School details

Name of school	Athelstan House School		
DCSF number	3186060		
Unique reference number	102941		
Type of school	Pre-preparatory		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 1979		
Age range of pupils	3-7		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 17	Girls: 13	Total: 30
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 1	Girls: 6	Total: 7
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 4,350-£7,380		
Address of school	36 Percy Road, Hampton, Middlesex TW12 2LA		
Telephone number	020 8979 1045		
Fax number	08714337851		
Email address	admin@athelstanhouseschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Elsa Woolf		
Proprietor	Mrs Elsa Woolf		
Reporting inspector	Elisabeth Linley HMI		
Dates of inspection	23 September 2009		