

# Chelsea Group of Children

Independent school inspection report

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Unique reference number	131662
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Inspection dates	18 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Karin Heap

Age group: 4-11

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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, 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.<sup>1</sup>

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

Chelsea Group of Children is a special school which offers day provision for 20 pupils aged between 4 and 11 years. All pupils have mild to moderate complex learning needs.. Over half have autism and over three quarters hold a statement of special educational needs. The school opened in 1997 and in October 2008 relocated to a new site in a residential area of south London, using its new premises to create a family orientated learning environment. At the time of the inspection the London boroughs of Hammersmith and Fulham, Lambeth, Wandsworth, Westminster, Hounslow, Richmond and Brent placed pupils at the school. A total of four children are in the Early Years Foundation Stage, none of whom are in receipt of nursery funded education. The school was last inspected in March 2007.

The school's motto is *'I do not fear stormy seas for I have learned to sail my boat'*, and it aims to *'meet each pupil's unique, developmental, behavioural and emotional needs and develop their cognitive abilities through the development of a firm foundation of skills'*.

## Evaluation of the school

Chelsea Group of Children provides a good quality of education and care and meets most of the regulations. All areas identified in the previous report have been fully addressed and the school has due regard for all health and safety and safeguarding procedures. Since the school has moved premises, two regulations regarding accommodation are now not met relating to the number of washrooms and the appropriateness of facilities for pupils who are ill, although there are building plans to address these issues by the summer term 2010. The premises are suitable and are adapted to promote the ethos of the school very well. As a result, it is a very happy school where pupils learn well and make good progress. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are fully included in all school activities, with good provision which ensures that they also learn and progress well.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

## Quality of education

The quality of education is good and is underpinned by a good curriculum, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. During the last inspection the provision of the school was judged outstanding. The school's holistic approach inspires pupils and staff and creates a very positive atmosphere for learning. Pupils make good progress overall, with outstanding progress in their personal development, communication skills and their ability to interact with others.

The curriculum is very well matched to meet the aims of the school and pupils' individual needs. Pupils' statements of special educational needs specify that they should loosely follow the National Curriculum. The curriculum is very well resourced in mathematics. Classrooms are well resourced in English, creative activities, movement and information and communication technology. The nature-based outdoor learning area supports and enhances pupils' learning well in lessons and at breaks and lunchtimes. The school employs two speech and language therapists and one occupational therapist, who provide the therapeutic element of the curriculum to a very high standard. The school has, as yet, very few curricular links with the community and other schools.

The school sets pupils of similar ability into mixed-age groups. Staff focus clearly on pupils' individual development when planning their lessons. However, when lessons are focused on learning styles of older pupils, younger pupils are sometimes limited in their opportunities to learn independently. There are therefore fewer opportunities for very young children to develop independent but supported play skills and explore new things when being guided by the teacher to interact with other children. Teaching is based on the range of developmental skills and abilities of each pupil. Pupils' therapeutic needs are fully recognised and influence each individual teaching approach. As a consequence work is well matched to pupil's individual needs. All learning is focused highly on improving pupils' communication and social interaction skills.

Teaching is good overall, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, with examples of outstanding practice observed in mathematics. During the last inspection, teaching was judged outstanding. Teachers' planning and assessment take into consideration the National Curriculum programmes of study. Lessons are closely monitored by the headteacher, who provides helpful and structured support to individual staff. In several lessons seen during the inspection, however, there was not enough emphasis on using succinct learning objectives to provide a clearer lesson focus to further accelerate pupils' learning.

The school has recently implemented a new system to assess pupils' learning based on the assessment levels of the National Curriculum and levels which recognise learning below the National Curriculum levels. This information is now being used to inform teachers' planning. However, this new development is not yet used consistently in all teaching groups and it is too early to analyse the assessment

information to indicate pupils' progress. The school has begun to use the new assessment tool to set targets for pupils and to evaluate its own performance.

## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The same judgement was given during the previous inspection.

The overwhelming majority of parents comment that their children enjoy coming to school and that they are delighted with the support they receive. Pupils clearly enjoy school, which is demonstrated by their good attendance; they show this in their attitude and enthusiasm for learning and in their very strong relationships with adults and with their peers.

There is a very strong focus on developing communication and social interaction skills to prepare pupils for the next stage in their life. Pupils learn well through practical activities, for example they have access to real-life opportunities in cookery lessons. Pupils are very well prepared for their next stage in life and for their future economic well-being because of the good balance between academic and therapeutic approaches to teaching and learning. Older pupils are taught a high degree of independence. Pupils are encouraged to take turns in fulfilling specific roles and responsibilities such as being the lunch helper and they are able to choose activities and move around school independently.

Pupils' positive support and interaction with each other show a very good awareness and acceptance of difference. Pupils and adults work in social harmony with mutual trust and respect. Pupils are helpful and polite, and their behaviour, taking into consideration their very complex needs, is outstanding.

Staff are employed from different countries and use their own history to support pupils' cultural development. Pupils' very good cultural, spiritual and moral development is also promoted through music and art; for example through African and Native American music topics and through daily, very well-structured assemblies. The school's aspirations in this area are very well documented in information to parents.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The same judgement was given at the previous inspection. The school takes good care of all health and safety procedures, with clear plans and good organisation of staff training and regular health and safety monitoring. External providers manage the school's formal health and safety procedures such as fire safety, building and premises very well. Safeguarding procedures, including safer recruitment of staff, are appropriate and staff are suitably trained to ensure a very strong focus on pupils' well-being.

Pupils feel safe, learn about healthy lifestyles and are very well prepared for their future. They are exceptionally well cared for. The very strong commitment of staff and their exceptionally positive relationships with pupils are major strengths of the school. The school complies with all of its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good, as is its overall effectiveness. There is a very strong focus on planning and teaching which succeeds in meeting children's individual needs. They are very happy in school, feel content and safe, and show excellent behaviour.

Children make good progress and their enjoyment level is very high. On entry, records show a wide range of ability and some extremely low levels of communication skills. Over time, children make good progress, with outstanding progress in personal development and aspects of their language and communication. They have a good understanding of what constitutes healthy living, show early awareness of how to keep safe and are at the early stages of developing practical skills for future living.

The curriculum is well balanced, with significant therapeutic elements and well-structured outdoor and creative activities. Because of mixed-age ability groups, learning activities are sometimes geared to older children. This at times limits children's opportunities to engage in explorative, self-directed and guided learning. However, teaching is of good quality, with good practical experience and strong reinforcement using repetition and sign language.

Thorough curriculum planning and assessment are based on detailed individual education plans and consistent reporting, but learning objectives in lessons are not always clear. All staff know children very well; they support them through exceptionally strong and trusting relationships and appropriate procedures for their safeguarding, health and safety. Good leadership and management have a clear focus on continuous improvement and use other support agencies and the school's own therapists very effectively.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003, as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

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

- provide sufficient washrooms for staff and pupils, including facilities for pupils with special needs, which take account of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(k))
- ensure that there are appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(l)).

## 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:

- use the school's new assessment data to inform lesson planning with a sharper focus on lesson objectives
- provide more opportunities for children for whom it is appropriate in the Early Years Foundation Stage to participate in self-directed learning.

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

Evaluation of boarding provision				
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## School details

Name of school	Chelsea Group of Children		
DCSF number	207/6395		
Unique reference number	131662		
Type of school	Special school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1997		
Age range of pupils	4-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 10	Girls: 10	Total: 20
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 8	Girls: 8	Total: 16
Annual fees (day pupils)	£24,450		
Address of school	The Gate House Magdalen Road London SW18 3NP		
Telephone number	020 8875 0573		
Fax number	020 8875 0573		
Email address	Chelseachildren@aol.com		
Headteacher	Mrs Jessica Duemler		
Proprietor	Mrs Libby Hartman		
Reporting inspector	Karin Heap		
Dates of inspection	18 November 2009		