

Radlett Preparatory School

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number 919/6034
Unique reference number 117615
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Reporting inspector Jacqueline Wordsworth HMI

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

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, 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

Information about the school

Radlett Preparatory School is an independent co-educational primary school which admits children aged four to eleven years. The school is registered for 480 pupils and there are currently 462 full time pupils on roll, taught in three classes per year group. The school was established over 70 years ago and moved to its present location in Radlett, in Hertfordshire, in 1980. It is housed in an extended Georgian listed building set in extensive grounds. The school was last inspected in 2007. It aims to 'provide an excellent, balanced education. Children are encouraged to realise their potential abilities, to learn to respect each other, to be well-mannered, morally upright and to be active members of a happy, supportive school.'

Evaluation of the school

Radlett Preparatory School provides a good standard of education for pupils who flourish, because they are happy and kept safe. As a result pupils are well motivated and are eager to learn. They make good progress in their learning and achieve well both in the main school, and in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Within this well-disciplined and caring environment, the school fosters pupils who are pleasant, well-behaved, courteous, well-mannered and respectful of the staff and of each other. The school complies fully with the regulations for independent schools including all those for the safeguarding and protection of children which it did not meet at the time of its previous inspection.

Quality of education

The quality of education is good and the school fulfils its aims well. It is underpinned by a broad and balanced good curriculum that provides rigorous coverage of the core skills of literacy and numeracy and is the basis of the school's strength in securing places for its pupils at popular state and independent secondary schools. The range of subjects and activities taught extends beyond the National Curriculum, and covers satisfactorily the areas of learning for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. All subjects of the curriculum have clear policies which, where appropriate, reflect the intentions of the National Curriculum.

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

The use of specialist teachers throughout the school for music, art and physical education is a particular strength, with pupils benefiting from their very good subject knowledge. Information and communication technology (ICT) provision is less strong. It has limited provision and is not fully used, especially by pupils, to secure progress across the whole curriculum.

The personal, social, health and citizenship programme includes a wide variety of activities, such as guidance on how to adopt healthy lifestyles for younger children and an understanding of public institutions for older pupils which successfully promote pupils' good personal development. The pupils enjoy and value the rich learning opportunities in physical education, music, drama and art. They are enthusiastic about the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer and appreciate the opportunity to develop further their sporting, creative and communication skills.

Teaching and assessment are good so pupils of all ages make good progress and attain standards that are above average. 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 pupils fall behind in their learning. Teachers pay very good attention to ensuring equality in lessons, treating all pupils equally regardless of gender or background.

The good teaching observed across the school during lessons, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, has some common features. Throughout lessons, teachers use questioning skilfully, frequently targeting questions carefully to assess learning of individual pupils and develop understanding. In most successful lessons, teachers show pupils exactly what they expect them to learn and pupils are encouraged to judge for themselves how successful their learning has been. Pupils discuss their learning sensibly and develop a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. This was most notable in a Year 2 English lesson on writing for a purpose. Pupils had previously read a story book and were encouraged to write to the author to explain what they liked about the book and to ask for further information from the author. This lesson successfully captured the pupils' imagination and they were very keen to ensure that their work was the very best it could be. The pupils buzzed with excitement because they clearly understood the task and what it was they were learning. Pupils forge ahead in such lessons, because the work is challenging and the pace is brisk.

However, in the less effective lessons, the activities planned, sometimes do not cater for all abilities well enough, particularly the most able. This has a particular impact in writing, where the teachers miss opportunities to consolidate skills taught in grammar lessons to develop pupils' extended writing. Consequently, standards in writing across some year groups, although above average are very slightly lower than in reading because writing skills are not taught systematically. Also there are too few opportunities for pupils to use a range of more complex writing styles and experience different genres. In mathematics, however, good opportunities are used to engage pupils in more open-ended investigations and problem solving activities; as a result standards are high in this area.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all ages is an important strength, with pupils acquiring a wide range of social skills that help them to develop into well-rounded individuals. Pupils are good at distinguishing right from wrong and they develop well under the influence of the school's strong moral code. This good personal development begins in the Early Years Foundation Stage when children settle in quickly and make good friends. There are many opportunities to celebrate pupils' achievements and this does much to promote pupils' self-esteem. Pupils make an effective contribution to the school's smooth running by taking on a wide range of duties, such as play leaders, helping the younger pupils with their reading and acting as school councillors. They contribute significantly to the wider community by singing and performing at local events and through their involvement with international charity projects. Cultural development and racial harmony are effectively promoted in the curriculum and by the celebration of a range of different festivals including Diwali and Hanukah, culminating in an inter-faith celebration of Harvest. As a result pupils' understanding of different cultures and traditions is well developed; this promotes their understanding of diversity and respect for each other's differences.

Pupils are well prepared for the next steps in their education and for their future lives. This is aided by the good progress they make in their basic skills, their ability to engage in teamwork through sporting and drama activities and by their high levels of confidence and self esteem. Attendance, punctuality and behaviour are good. Pupils develop positive attitudes to learning, good self control and the capacity to concentrate and work cooperatively as well as independently. When pupils are given responsibility for their own learning, they clearly enjoy their lessons and are proud of what they achieve. When teachers take too much control of their lessons, pupils remain well behaved and conscientious but display less obvious enjoyment.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for the pupils' welfare, health and safety, including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, is good and procedures are robust. Policies are thoughtfully written and centred on minimising risk. Staff are sensitive to pupils' individual pastoral and welfare needs. Of particular note is the work of the school matron, whose exemplary policies, procedures and well documented care plans for pupils who require medical attention result in them receiving outstanding care. Effective and robust procedures for safeguarding pupils, including comprehensive child protection arrangements, are in place with the school utilising members of staff who have been well trained. As a result, pupils, staff and parents report that they appreciate the safe, caring, family environment provided by the school.

Good attention is paid to teaching pupils about staying safe and healthy living. This is well supported by ample opportunities for physical education and sporting activities.

The school is fully inclusive and complies with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2000 and sensible plans are in place to improve accessibility for those with disabilities.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has established suitable procedures for ensuring that, prior to taking up their responsibilities, all teaching and non-teaching staff, volunteers, supply staff and the proprietor are checked for their suitability to work with children and young people. This has improved since the previous inspection. All required checks, including an enhanced criminal records bureau check, have been completed for those in regular contact with pupils and these are kept, as required, in a single central record which is now exemplary.

School's premises and accommodation

The school is located in a listed building and its extensions, and is set in extensive grounds which include woodland which is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The premises are well-maintained and provide a welcoming learning environment although some classrooms are small and can limit the learning activities. Facilities for pupils who are ill are of a very high quality. The school has recently embarked on placing diffusers on all its fluorescent lights to minimise the effects of any potential risks to pupils should a tube shatter.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school has established good links with parents and outside agencies. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress through informal meetings as well as twice-yearly review meetings and regular written reports.

Procedures for handling complaints

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

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. It is satisfactory because in spite of the extensive changes made to the curriculum, the provision is in its infancy, and it is too early to judge the long-term effect of these changes. In a relatively short time, staff, led by the capable head of infants have

successfully implemented more child led activities whilst retaining the more formal and teacher directed lessons which have served children well in previous times. However, the premises present a challenge to teachers in planning a more child-centred approach in the afternoons. Classrooms are relatively small and the abundance of furniture restricts the use of the floor as a learning resource. The outdoor play area is underdeveloped as a tempting space to encourage spontaneous and physical play and urgently needs to provide pupils with daily access to a more natural environment. Its location away from the classroom presents some organisational difficulties.

The good leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is demonstrated by the rapidly improving provision, and that all of the development and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are met. Evidence seen of the quality of new teaching, curriculum planning and assessment procedures demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve this aspect of their work

As in other areas of school, each child is truly valued as an individual. Children display positive attitudes towards learning and respond appropriately to instructions. They behave well in their classes and during play; therefore no time is wasted and learning flows without interruption. As a result, children make good progress in all areas of their development relative to their starting points and capabilities and feel safe and well cared for.

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:

- grasp opportunities to extend more able pupils and help them to attain the highest possible standards by teaching writing skills systematically across the school and provide more opportunities for pupils to write at length
- increase the use of ICT across the curriculum
- provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills in lessons.

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?			√	

School details

Name of school	Radlett Preparatory School		
DCSF number	919/6034		
Unique reference number	117615		
Type of school	Day Preparatory School		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1935		
Age range of pupils	4 - 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 295	Girls: 167	Total: 462
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 6600		
Address of school	Kendal Hall Watling Street Radlett Hertfordshire WD7 7LY		
Telephone number	01923 856812		
Fax number	01923 855880		
Email address	admin@radlett-prep.herts.sch.uk		
Headteacher	Mr S Rundle		
Proprietor	Mr W Warren		
Reporting inspector	Jacqueline Wordsworth HMI		
Dates of inspection	1-2 December 2009		