

Yorston Lodge School

Independent school inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Peter Toft HMI

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

The inspection of the school was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A¹ of the Education Act 2002, 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 childcare provision³ was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.⁴

Information about the school

Yorston Lodge School is located near the centre of Knutsford. It was established in 1904. In 2006 it became part of a small group of schools managed by Montague Place Ltd. The school provides independent education for boys and girls aged three to 11 years. Currently it has 144 pupils on roll. None of the pupils has been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. The Yorston Lodge Out of School Club runs before and after school hours and during most of the school's holiday periods to provide registered childcare. This enables pupils of the school, where necessary, to be dropped off and picked up in line with the work commitments of their parents. The Early Years Foundation Stage is provided for in kindergarten and reception classes. Thirty seven children in this phase receive nursery education funding. The school was last inspected in May 2007 and the registered childcare provision was last inspected in August 2007.

The school aims to: provide a happy, caring and family environment; treat each child as an individual; provide a learning experience which is fun and stimulating; ensure that each child achieves his or her potential; and ensure that children learn to respect each other. The school has longstanding and close links with parents and the local community. It has a long tradition of preparing pupils successfully to enter academically selective secondary schools in both the maintained and independent sectors.

Evaluation of the school

Yorston Lodge is an outstandingly effective school. It meets its aims. Pupils' progress, concentration, behaviour and personal development are excellent, and academic standards are very high. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are well provided for and they make rapid progress. The school runs very smoothly. Safeguarding procedures are first-rate and the school meets all regulations. It

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

provides a secure, caring and civilised atmosphere in which children enjoy the excellent teaching which is well supported by rigorous assessment procedures. Opportunities for pupils to learn within the broad curriculum and extensive activities are ample. Provision for children in the out-of-hours childcare club matches the high quality of that in the school as a whole. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Quality of education

The overall quality of education is outstanding. The curriculum is outstanding in the main school and good in the Early Years Foundation Stage in its support for pupils' academic learning and personal development. It covers the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, together with a wide range of other subjects, with exceptional rigour. It goes well beyond the National Curriculum in the junior school to cover performing arts, reasoning and languages. It is broad and balanced, giving pupils an excellent foundation for secondary education. It is well planned to ensure effective coverage. Lesson preparation is highly effective in promoting the pupils' progress. Schemes of work are very detailed and thorough for English and mathematics; they are in use for all other subjects, providing concise guidance for teachers, with the scheme for French being particularly effective. The excellent coverage of English throughout the school helps pupils to express themselves clearly and confidently both in writing and orally. Good use is made of external resources to cover some specialist aspects of subjects such as design and technology and physical education. Extra-curricular provision is extensive and participation rates are high. The curriculum is efficiently timetabled and the headteacher has a clear oversight of what is covered and to what extent. The curriculum has a strong emphasis on personal development and is effective in helping pupils to cooperate with and respect each other.

Overall, teaching and assessment are outstandingly effective in the main school and good in the Early Years Foundation Stage in supporting the pupils' learning and personal development. The quality of teaching is good in the nursery and outstanding throughout the rest of the school. Teachers and support staff have very high expectations and first-rate subject expertise. Staff use a wide range of interesting activities to stimulate learning. They show considerable skill in passing this on to pupils, and in helping them to think clearly. They ask questions of individual pupils and give them ample time to formulate their answers in depth. Concentration levels in class are intense and pupils are very keen to listen, answer questions and engage in articulate class discussions. Pupils are highly motivated by the teaching and the activities set. They clearly see the value of hard work in lessons and this is reflected in their diligence in completing the homework which is regularly set. Taken together with very strong support for learning from their parents, these factors promote the pupils' impressive progress.

Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and tracking their progress are excellent. Teachers mark pupils' work frequently and rigorously, giving first-rate feedback to promote further learning. They observe closely the progress pupils make in class and

they administer nationally validated tests and other assessments regularly. These procedures give them a crystal-clear insight into how well each pupil is doing, in relation to both their prior attainment and expectations for the age group. They also enable them to help pupils know how well they are doing. This provides highly effective support for teachers as they work to stimulate pupils' learning. It also enables the school to analyse trends, identify needs for extra tuition, report frequently to parents on progress and guide pupils towards an appropriate secondary education. It helps teachers to ensure that each of their pupils is properly stretched, as indicated by the comment of one parent that the school, 'brings out the best in every child.'

Pupils make outstanding progress throughout the broad curriculum, both in lessons and as they move from year to year up the school. Standards are very high in a wide range of subjects throughout the age range, evident particularly in English, mathematics and reasoning, as shown in the very high success rate of pupils securing places in selective secondary schools. It is also shown in test results, work books, hearing pupils read and observing lessons. Attainment in art, and design and technology, for example, is excellent as shown by displays of pupils' past work. Sporting achievements are impressive; the school's teams compete well locally and some pupils currently on roll are exceptional performers. Three quarters of pupils learn a musical instrument and the school's records show regular school performances in drama and music, with high levels of pupil participation.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding in both the main school and the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils join the school ready to learn, with strong parental backing. The school builds very well on this solid foundation beginning with highly effective induction in the kindergarten into how to relate to other children and adults. The school continues to secure the excellent personal development of all pupils throughout the age range. They quickly learn to listen, interact, express their opinions and join in with the activities provided. They develop socially into self-confident and considerate individuals, well able to interact with their peers and adults and to work responsibly on their own and in groups. They get on with staff and each other extremely well. Behaviour, both in school time and the out-of-school childcare time, is exemplary and relationships are harmonious. Departures from this are rare and minor, and staff are adept at channelling them into positive behaviour.

Attendance is good. Interesting and varied opportunities are provided for involvement with the local community, which the pupils engage in enthusiastically. Pupils develop a keen moral sense and can clearly distinguish right from wrong. The school gives excellent opportunity for pupils to reflect and develop spiritually. Times for prayer are taken seriously. Pupils are given a clear insight into the nature of the various religions practised in the country. The curriculum helps them develop a strong insight into how the country's public institutions are intended to promote

harmony among the population. The school extends this well and pupils develop an excellent understanding of different cultures, here and abroad, through lessons and specific links with institutions overseas. The curriculum and additional activities provide an excellent basis for this.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding throughout the school, the Early Years Foundation Stage and out-of-hours childcare club. At the heart of this lie a pervasive family atmosphere, the caring and vigilant work of the staff and the school's clear and agreed procedures to promote the care of children. The pupils respond with thoughtful consideration for others and the school premises. The school has drawn up strong policies to promote good behaviour and prevent bullying. Staff are adept at implementing these. They also promote healthy living well by teaching about healthy eating and by providing ample opportunities for sports and exercise.

The school has very effective procedures to promote the safeguarding of pupils and it complies with all statutory requirements for the school and childcare provision. Fire drills and safety precautions are in order. Risk assessment is carried out appropriately. The school has worked to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act by, for example, auditing the accessibility of the building for those with physical disabilities. Its recent plans to overcome some access problems have not been granted planning permission, and the school is now considering remaining options. Nevertheless, it does not fully meet regulations.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school makes the required checks when appointing adults to work with children and maintains a single central register with details of all the required checks.

School's premises and accommodation

The school is accommodated in a main building within enclosed grounds. The outside area is small but well equipped for safe play, and has soft surfaces. The classrooms are well maintained and provide bright and cheerful areas for learning. They are enlivened by vivid displays of pupils' work. Facilities for music and computing are adequate and very well used. The school makes good use of its accommodation for sports and exercise and supplements this well by using external facilities, for example, for swimming. The building is in good condition and is well maintained. It is very well supervised by staff when children are present. The building continues to provide limited access to the disabled.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school regularly and frequently provides very good information to parents using an appropriate range of methods. Parents are highly satisfied with this, and the school's provision overall.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's complaints procedure satisfies requirements and parents are made aware of its contents through parent booklets.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Excellent provision for children's care and welfare promotes their safety both in the school and the related out-of-hours childcare club. Requirements for registration are met. Adults are suitably qualified, with very good levels of supervision at all times. Although staff are qualified in first aid there is currently no member of staff with a paediatric first aid certificate. Children are happy, confident and eager to learn. They are well mannered and enjoy taking responsibility. They interact well with each other in play and lessons. They are articulate and demonstrate skills which are in advance of the levels usually expected for their age in all of the areas of learning. Children settle quickly into nursery and induction procedures are sensitive and flexible. Provision in the kindergarten is also flexible and the school responds well to the varying needs of families. The school has an excellent partnership with parents.

The indoor learning environment is bright and cheerful, despite its small size. Restricted outdoor space limits opportunities for learning out of doors. However, the school recognises this and plans have been drawn up to adapt the premises. Well-qualified staff provide good support for learning and this helps enable children to make excellent progress. Children receive tailored support, for example, in daily individual reading sessions in the Reception class. This contributes extremely well to the development of their confidence and skill. Assessment procedures are good and improving. Staff are developing expertise in assessing children's progress and identifying their needs through the use of ongoing recorded observations.

The school meets children's individual needs well, through high standards of care and teaching. Staff are developing the curriculum to give children greater opportunities for adventurous and investigative learning activities. Excellent leadership and management ensure staff expertise in creating such opportunities is increasing, though this is 'work in progress'. Although these are new and important improvements, however, outcomes for children are consistently and traditionally excellent.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ('the Regulations')⁵, with the exception of those listed below.

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

- Ensure that at least one person with a current paediatric first aid certificate is on the premises at all times when children are present and that there is at least one person on outings who has a current paediatric first aid certificate.

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Strengthen further curriculum development in the Early Years Foundation Stage by providing an enhanced programme of professional development for staff to promote more effective independent learning among the younger children.

⁵ www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.htm

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	Yorston Lodge School		
DCSF number	895/6013		
Unique reference number (URN)	111479		
EY URN (for registered childcare only)	EY355213		
Type of school	Co-educational Day School		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1904		
Age range of pupils	3-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 58	Girls: 65	Total: 123
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 11	Girls: 10	Total: 21
Number of pupils aged 0–3 in registered childcare provision	Boys: 3	Girls: 4	Total: 7
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,535		
Annual fees (childcare)	Fees vary up to a maximum of £1,865 according to the time pupils are cared for.		
Address of school	18 St John's Road Knutsford Cheshire WA16 0DP		
Telephone number	01565 633177		
Fax number	01656 632484		
Email address	headmistress@yorstonlodeschool.com		
Headteacher	Mrs Janet Dallimore		
Proprietor	Montague Place Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Peter Toft HMI		
Dates of inspection	4-5 February 2010		