

The New School

Independent school progress report

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Unique reference number	113624
Inspection number	344481
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Reporting inspector	Thomas Smith

Age group: 3–7

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Purpose and scope of the visit

This inspection visit was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002,¹ as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005.²

The visit was conducted at the request of the Registration Authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan following the previous inspection.

Information about the school

The New School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged between three and seven years of age. It was opened in September 1992. It is situated in Exminster on the outskirts of Exeter in Devon. Admission is non-selective. No pupil has a statement of special educational need. There are 47 pupils on roll. Ten of these are part time. There are 29 boys and 18 girls. The school's aim is to provide 'a solid grounding in the key skills without losing sight of the child-centred creative aspect of an infant environment'.

Context of the visit

The school was last inspected in December 2007. Following that inspection the school was required to submit an action plan to show how it would address the issues raised within the report. The school did not provide this action plan for evaluation until the summer term of 2008. The evaluation judged that, although the school had been working towards meeting the non-compliance issues, it had failed to provide evidence of the outcomes of its initiatives. There was an inspection visit to the school in February 2009, which was unannounced and which was a response to concerns expressed about the external condition of the building, incomplete checks on staff, and general health and safety around the school. Following that visit the school was required to address additional issues, particularly relating to health and safety matters. This is the report of the second monitoring visit to evaluate progress against the school's action plan.

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

At the inspection in 2007 the school was judged to provide 'an outstanding quality of education'. The report noted that pupils were well cared for and that procedures for health and safety were satisfactory. However, it was reported that the designated person with responsibility for safeguarding matters had not undertaken the

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

appropriate training, some staff checks had not been completed, and accommodation for pupils who may become ill did not meet the requirements. Despite the delay in responding to the issues through an action plan, the school has, overall, made satisfactory progress in addressing these shortfalls. Two, however, remain to be effectively addressed.

The designated person for safeguarding matters has now undertaken appropriate training provided by the Local Safeguarding Children Board. This was accomplished in June 2008. This designated person then ensured that, within two months, the remainder of the staff received the required awareness training.

Following the unannounced visit, the school was required to conduct risk assessments relating to the safety of the premises and the presence of a pet dog. The school has responded by risk assessing both internal and external features of the building. A fire risk assessment has also been undertaken. Externally, the school has recognised that slates from a steeply pitched roof may detach in severe weather conditions. The school is in the process of receiving estimates for remedial works and parents have held a fund-raising event to help contribute towards the costs of full replacement. Until such time as permanent repairs are undertaken, the school has restricted the areas of the grounds that pupils may use. Risk assessments have also been undertaken in respect of all classrooms and other internal areas, as well as of some of the events which take place in the school, for example speech and drama and French club. Other activities, such as football and gymnastics, are also risk assessed. The school's response is satisfactory.

The pet dog has remained on the premises. This elderly small dog appears well socialised and pupils respond to it readily when it ventures away from the head teacher's office. A risk assessment has been undertaken and pupils have been instructed to wash their hands after handling or stroking the dog. Some pupils were noted doing this. No concerns have been expressed by parents.

The report from the 2007 inspection noted that the school had not carried out some essential checks before staff appointments were confirmed. Most of the required checks are now carried out on all staff but the school cannot provide evidence that character references have been obtained for a minority of staff. This remains unsatisfactory. The school has failed to provide appropriate facilities for pupils who may become ill. Since the original report, the school has provided a bed in a quiet area, along with a portable sink. However, this arrangement is some distance from toilet facilities and it continues to be unsatisfactory.

The report required the school to compile a three-year plan by which it might meet its requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002. It has done this and the plan follows a format that includes meeting the Act's requirements in the areas of curriculum, the physical environment and the ways in which information will be communicated to those with any disability. The plan is appropriately resourced and referenced to a timescale.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

As a result of this inspection visit, the school must take action to meet the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003³ as amended ('the Regulations'), as follows:

- ensure that in respect of all staff evidence of character references are obtained and held on file (paragraph 4(2)(a))
- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who may become ill (paragraph 5(l)).

³ www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.htm

School details

Name of school	The New School		
DCSF number	878/6046		
Unique reference number	113624		
Type of school	Pre-preparatory		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	16 September 1992		
Age range of pupils	3–7 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 26	Girls: 11	Total: 37
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 3	Girls: 7	Total: 10
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,555		
Address of school	The Avenue Exminster Exeter Devon EX6 8AT		
Telephone number	01392 496122		
Fax number	01392 496122		
Email address	michelletaylorheadmistress@yahoo.co.uk		
Headteacher	Michelle Taylor		
Proprietor	Michelle Taylor		
Reporting inspector	Mr Thomas Smith		
Dates of inspection	9 November 2009		