

Educare Small School

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number	314/6070
Unique Reference Number (URN)	131351
Inspection number	344644
Inspection dates	11 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Wendy Forbes

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 08456 404040
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002¹, 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.

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

Educare Small School is a very small, non-selective independent primary school for pupils aged between three and 11 years, which opened in 1997. It is located on the outskirts of Kingston upon Thames and occupies the ground floor of a carefully adapted building originally constructed as a Baptist church. Currently, there are no pupils in the final Year 6. There are 34 pupils on roll, including 19 in the Early Years Foundation Stage; 12 of whom are part time and 14 who receive government nursery funding. There are very few who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and no child has a statement of special educational needs. All speak English as a first language. There are three mixed-age classes: Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, with ability groups for literacy and mathematics teaching. When the school assesses that they are ready, children of Reception age transfer early to Key Stage 1 before the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is an early morning school club from 8.00am to 9.00am and an after-school club until 6.00pm each evening organised and supervised by the school.

The school aims for pupils 'to be independent learners and thinkers with an enthusiasm for learning who are able to organise their own learning effectively, make choices and interact within a stimulating and creative environment.' The school offers parents and carers 'an alternative to large communities with an education that addresses the whole development of each child.' The school was last inspected in January 2007.

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

Evaluation of the school

Educare Small School provides a satisfactory quality of education overall and satisfactory effectiveness in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Small classes, highly individualised support, teachers' good subject knowledge and good personal development help pupils make satisfactory academic progress overall with the few pupils in Key Stage 2 making good progress by the time they leave. Within the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are provided with very different experiences: children in the Kindergarten, including a few younger children of Reception age, enjoy a vibrant, stimulating and creative provision which ensures that they make satisfactory progress in their learning. However, older children of Reception age who join Key Stage 1 before the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage miss out on a range of opportunities within the Early Years curriculum to play, explore and investigate. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good throughout the school, as a result of the high levels of care from staff. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. Provision for their welfare, health and safety is good and there are effective arrangements for safeguarding and child protection. Since the last inspection, the school has made good progress in meeting all the regulations that were not met at the time of the last inspection and now complies in full with all regulatory requirements.

Quality of education

The quality of education is satisfactory overall, as is the curriculum, from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards. Since the last inspection, the school has continued to develop provision for its youngest children by implementing the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage framework. The curriculum policy is supported by schemes of work based on a two-yearly cycle of topics linked to the National Curriculum. This ensures that pupils study a broad and balanced range of subjects which include all the required areas of experience. Well selected topics cover and link a wide range of subject areas enabling pupils to acquire good skills in writing, speaking and listening. Since the last inspection, the school has increased the amount of time available in Key Stage 1 and 2 for developing skills in mathematics, although many planned mathematics activities are too long. Younger children, particularly those of Reception age working in Key Stage 1, find it difficult to concentrate and sustain their interest. The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is designed well for the youngest children in the Kindergarten. Opportunities for play, exploration and outdoor learning are planned well; however, not all children of Reception age have the same access to the creative range of tasks and activities. As a result, this limits their progress towards some of their early learning goals. The curriculum is enriched by the strong emphasis on personal, social and health education including the provision of the Alexander Technique to help pupils develop physically, emotionally and spiritually. It is further enhanced by the provision of specialist time for music, art, dance, drama and French. The development of pupils' information and communication technology

skills is limited by the number of computers and laptops available; however, the school is extending the range of its software resources to support learning in basic skills in numeracy and literacy.

The quality of teaching and assessment overall is satisfactory with some good features, and pupils make satisfactory progress overall. Staff expertise is used well to enable older pupils to be taught effectively individually and in small groups. As a result, those few in Key Stage 2 make good progress and achieve above the expected levels for their age, ensuring that they are prepared well for secondary education. Strong relationships between staff and pupils are a consistent feature throughout the school. Most pupils are keen to learn and are able to express their views and opinions with confidence. In the best lessons in the Kindergarten, the swift pace, high expectations and appropriate challenge of activities ensure that children enjoy their learning. However, in a few lessons in the rest of the school, younger pupils spend too long sitting and listening at the start of a lesson and become restless. Activities are not sufficiently challenging and as a result pupils make slower progress in their learning. This is because assessment information regularly collected by teachers is not always used effectively to determine the individual's learning needs, particularly those of younger children, and as a result, teachers' daily plans do not always match their needs.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good throughout the school, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, as it was at the time of the last inspection. A warm, welcoming ethos is appreciated by pupils, one remarking, 'It's just like we're all one family.' Wherever observed, all pupils, including the youngest, were happy to do what was asked of them. They enjoy school and most get on well with each other. Although there is no formal mechanism for airing their views, they are confident that adults value them and are happy to listen to whatever they have to say, taking their views seriously. Positive attitudes to learning are demonstrated by good behaviour and regular attendance by most pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, because of the few parents who take family holidays in term time, overall attendance is not as high as it could be. A few pupils are regularly late at the start of the day, missing important activities, such as 'movement circles', which are aimed at preparing them both emotionally and physically for their learning. Pupils' spiritual development is promoted well through dedicated daily 'quiet time' and opportunities for reflection through 'circle time'. Pupils make a positive contribution to the wider community through their involvement in local projects such as road safety and eco schemes and appreciate opportunities to raise funds for charities. They have a good moral awareness of what is right, and a clear understanding of those less fortunate than themselves. Cultural development and racial harmony are effectively promoted through the range of different festivals celebrated and the religious education curriculum taught. Most pupils are appropriately aware of how public institutions and

services work. They often go off-site to visit places of educational interest such as the Natural History and Science Museums and the Big Schools Bird Watch in Richmond Park. They make effective use of local facilities for physical education. Visitors come to the school and there are many opportunities for playing and working together and enjoying a small range of extra-curricular activities such as yoga, singing and recorder playing.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Arrangements to ensure pupils' safeguarding, welfare, health and safety are good. The required policies are in place and are implemented consistently. As a result, provision for pupils' welfare and safety is good throughout the school, including for those in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils are all very well cared for and have a clear understanding of the importance of staying healthy. The vast majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school. As one parent stated, 'My child loves school ... all the teachers treat the children as if they are part of one very large family.' Most pupils say that they feel safe at school, that bullying rarely occurs and that any incidents are dealt with effectively by staff. Pupils confirm that if they are worried about anything there are always adults around to ask for help. Parents and carers evaluate that the environment of the school and its grounds feels safe. Staff have undertaken paediatric and anaphylaxis first-aid training as well as child protection training and these qualifications are regularly updated. The school has established suitable procedures for ensuring that, prior to taking up their responsibilities, all teaching and non-teaching staff, volunteers and the proprietorial body are checked for their suitability to work with children. The required checks have been completed and are recorded in a single central register as prescribed. Fire checks are carried out and the school tests the fire escape procedures regularly. The school fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision and effectiveness of the setting are satisfactory because leadership, management and practices over the two age groups, although satisfactory, are not yet clearly defined and cohesive enough. The Kindergarten is a distinct provision, led and managed well. Children transfer to Key Stage 1 when the school feels they are ready. Management of their education is subsumed within that of the whole school. Children's experiences, therefore, are very different in the two age groups. The Kindergarten supports learning and development effectively in a vibrant, creative environment with a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities, both indoors and outside. Children are closely monitored so individual needs are met. Adults support learning well in the Reception group, because of high staff ratios and broad curriculum provided. However, less focus on learning through child-initiated active play and consolidation of new learning limits children's development. The outdoor play area, although satisfactory, is ageing and less well planned and resourced, with limited access to climbing apparatus.

Good arrangements for safeguarding promote children's personal development and well-being. Partnership and relationships with parents and carers are good. Welfare requirements are met through the policies and practices of the whole school.

Children enter Kindergarten with skills at or a little above expectation. They make satisfactory progress overall, and good progress in some areas such as knowledge and understanding of the world. Outcomes are satisfactory. Most children attain or exceed the early learning goals, except in communication, language and literacy, where attainment is lower than in other areas of learning. They enjoy school, although over-long sessions in Reception sometimes create boredom. Most children are well-behaved, confident and friendly; they understand right from wrong and care for their environment.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

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:

- make effective use of assessment information in order to plan teaching and learning activities that will consistently challenge particularly the younger children
- implement the use of a detailed teachers' daily planning sheet so that it clearly shows how the needs of individual pupils are to be met
- revise the structure and balance of the timetable to ensure an appropriate balance of teaching and learning activities for pupils' needs and abilities, particularly in basic skills, and, for those of Reception age, access to an appropriate balance of opportunities and activities to enable them to make good progress in all areas of their learning
- develop the outdoor learning area so that it complements the good range of indoor activities available in the Kindergarten.

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	Educare Small School		
DCSF number	314/6070		
Unique Reference Number (URN)	131351		
Type of school	Primary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	March 1997		
Age range of pupils	3-11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 14	Girls: 8	Total: 22
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 6	Girls: 6	Total: 12
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,900		
Address of school	12 Cowleaze Road Kingston upon Thames Surrey KT2 6DZ		
Telephone number	020 8547 0144		
Fax number	020 8546 5901		
Email address	educaresmall@btconnect.com		
Headteacher	Mrs E Steinthal		
Proprietor	Educare Small School Trust		
Reporting inspector	Wendy Forbes		
Dates of inspection	11 March 2010		