

L'Ecole Bilingue Elémentaire

Independent school inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Michèle Messaoudi

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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

L'Ecole Bilingue Élémentaire is an independent, non-denominational school for boys and girls situated in recently converted premises in the London Borough of Westminster. It was opened in 2006 by the current proprietors to provide a bilingual French/English education based on the French educational system. It aims to provide a high quality bilingual education by immersion, which is a method of foreign language instruction in which the curriculum is taught through both the chosen languages, in this case French and English. It is an 'école homologuée' which operates under the auspices of L'Agence pour l'Enseignement Français à l'Etranger and it is registered for a maximum of 120 pupils aged from three to 11 years. In the last three years, it has expanded to the full three to 11 age range and it merged in 2008 with its sister school which had opened in 2004 and was located in South Kensington. There are currently 113 pupils on roll, none of whom has a statement of special educational needs. The provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage includes a Nursery class and a Reception class and all of the 33 children in this age group receive public funding under the government's nursery education grant scheme. Pupils travel from a wide catchment area and the school provides a minibus service to transport pupils who live in South-West London. The school is inspected annually by the French inspectorate. It had its first inspection by Ofsted in April 2007 at the present address.

Evaluation of the school

L'Ecole Bilingue Élémentaire provides an outstanding quality of education and meets its stated aims fully, as a result of which parents express a very high level of satisfaction with all aspects of its work. Since the last inspection, the leadership has implemented very effective strategies to further improve the bilingual provision while the school was expanding in size and age range. Consequently, the quality of 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

curriculum, teaching and assessment, formerly found to be good, is now outstanding and enables pupils to make outstanding progress. The school has maintained the robustness of its safeguarding procedures and continues to make outstanding provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety. It has made a good start in combining the requirements of French nursery education with those of the English Early Years Foundation Stage framework and the overall effectiveness of this stage is good. The school now has adequate facilities for pupils who are sick and, as a result of the good progress it has made since the last inspection, it meets all of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The quality of education is outstanding. As a direct consequence of careful planning, close monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning and rigorous evaluation of the strategies in place, the curriculum is outstanding and serves each pupil extremely well. Bilingual learning through the immersion method begins in the Early Years Foundation Stage where nursery children are taught in French and supported by an English classroom assistant and reception children are taught half in French and half in English by two different teachers. From Year 1, the curriculum is taught by both French and English teachers in varying proportions of French or English according to subjects and careful planning ensures that there is no language deficit. For example, as most history lessons are taught in French and most geography lessons in English, the language used specifically in these subjects is re-used in English and French language lessons, as well as other subjects to keep a balance in bilingual language development. This applies all the more to science which is totally taught in English. The planning of subjects also maintains a balance between the French and the English cultures, for example in art and music. The breadth of the curriculum encompasses all the subjects of the French curriculum and those of the English National Curriculum. Religious education is not taught. The curriculum is enhanced by weekly swimming from Year 2, piano and violin tuition and an exceptionally rich programme of educational visits throughout the school. Close monitoring of pupils' progress enables the school to identify those who have linguistic or learning needs at an early stage. This enables the school to provide a timely intervention programme which might include weekly language support lessons or sessions with a speech therapist.

Teaching and assessment are outstanding. The leadership has established a healthy culture of professional development in which teachers share the existing best practice through observations carried out by the headteacher and by colleagues, as well as through weekly discussions. Staff are highly motivated by the bilingual project and demonstrate flexibility in their approaches and methods. The teaching is underpinned by excellent subject knowledge and very high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teachers know their pupils very well and so match their needs closely by planning appropriate tasks, using suitable resources and providing

targeted support to individuals who need it. They have established good working relationships and routines which ensure a smooth transition from individual to group work. Teachers model a high level of language in French and English and frequently engage pupils in work on word definitions to extend and deepen pupils' understanding. Where the teaching is at its best, it is dynamic and moves pupils' learning on at a brisk pace, building on their prior learning systematically, providing visual prompts to support them in their task while fostering independent learning and maintaining a consistently high level of challenge for all throughout the lesson. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the teaching is mostly good and underpinned by excellent knowledge of children's needs and aptitudes. However, there are missed opportunities to promote children's independent learning. Throughout the school, teachers give constructive, often detailed, verbal feedback to pupils to show them how to further improve their work, which enables pupils to accelerate their progress. Some teachers also provide excellent written feedback when they mark pupils' work and this practice is gradually being disseminated throughout the school to ensure that pupils can always refer to excellent academic guidance whenever they need to. Individual pupils' progress is tracked rigorously and the school is developing its own bilingual assessment resources. Twice a year, parents receive exceptionally detailed reports which clearly indicate the progress their children make in their knowledge and skills in each topic of each subject area throughout the school. Consequently, parents feel well informed of their children's progress.

Pupils make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points as a direct consequence of the outstanding education they receive. Assessments show that pupils achieve particularly highly in French and mathematics. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make at least good progress. By the end of Reception, they achieve the expected goals in reading and exceed them in the other areas of learning. They begin to learn to read formally from the age of six and develop excellent reading and writing skills in both languages from then on.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils love their school and their attendance is good throughout the school. One pupil reflected the views of many when saying, 'My teachers are very helpful; I have many friends and I enjoy most activities.' Through the programme of assemblies and personal, social and health education, pupils have opportunities for reflection and for discussing moral issues, for example, anger management. Most pupils show awareness of others' needs. They respond positively to the consistent implementation of the reward system and their behaviour is good. The school works closely with parents to support a few pupils who have not yet developed the expected level of self-discipline.

Pupils have good social skills, reflected in their good manners and ability to work constructively in pairs and in groups. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children negotiate the use of resources amicably and take turns to play. The school is a

multicultural environment and pupils play harmoniously together. Pupils learn about public institutions in France and in England through the citizenship programme. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children learn about 'people who help us' through stories and educational visits. Pupils contribute to the life of the school by donating books and toys, helping around their classrooms and making presentations in assembly. They participate in races to raise funds for charities. However, pupils have insufficient responsibilities at school and limited opportunities to contribute to the wider community. The school recognises this and has plans in hand to improve this aspect of the provision. Pupils' cultural and multicultural development is promoted well through a good range of resources, the celebration of world festivals in assemblies and educational visits to museums and theatres. Their creative and linguistic skills are further extended by the range of after-school clubs.

In addition to acquiring excellent basic skills, pupils' access to two distinctly different modes of thinking and developing ability to speak two languages fluently prepare them extremely well for their future. This gives parents a wide range of options when choosing their child's next school, which many appreciate.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety throughout the school is outstanding. Safeguarding arrangements are robust. Rigorous recruitment procedures ensure that all the required checks are carried out on staff to determine their suitability to work with children and recorded centrally. The staff's understanding of their responsibilities is supported by appropriate training and user-friendly policies and procedures which they implement consistently. Pupils settle in quickly and feel very safe because of the exceptional care they receive. They say that there are far fewer accidents than formerly, partly because they are developing a growing awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe and partly because new, soft surfacing for the playground has made outdoor play much safer. The school provides meticulous care for pupils who have medical needs. Its facilities for pupils who are sick now meet requirements as a result of installing a sink in the dedicated space. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has appropriate first-aid training for this age group. Year 6 pupils also have first-aid and road safety training. Pupils develop a good understanding of how to be healthy because there is a high emphasis on hygiene routines and they are encouraged to eat healthily. The canteen provides well-balanced menus and staff encourage pupils to develop good eating habits. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 enjoy a wide range of physical activities in the local sports centre. Pupils from Year 2 to Year 6 have weekly swimming lessons and work towards varying levels of swimming proficiency.

The school fulfils its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Good leadership and management ensure good outcomes for all children and accurate identification of the priorities for improving the provision, which is also good. The school promotes children's welfare extremely well in very close partnerships with parents. The curriculum provides a good range of activities and experiences which effectively promotes the six areas of learning, and its breadth is enhanced very well by educational visits. For example, children enjoyed visiting the London Aquarium to extend their knowledge of sea creatures. The balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities is satisfactory. With support from the local authority, the school has increased its range of resources to provide interesting learning opportunities through play. However, it does not make full use of the indoor and outdoor space to extend children's independent learning skills. Small numbers in each class help well-qualified staff to match work to children's needs effectively. Children's speaking, listening and reasoning skills are highly developed because staff extend their learning by asking open-ended questions. However, staff do not consistently exploit opportunities to extend children's knowledge and skills by getting involved in children's play and talking to them about the activities that they choose by themselves. Robust systems are in place to assess children's work in all six areas of learning and the required information is communicated to the local authority. However, the daily observations of individual children's learning are not always closely linked to the early learning goals and this information is not always used to plan children's next learning steps.

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.

- Continue to share the best practice in teaching and marking to enable pupils to progress at an even faster rate.
- Widen all pupils' opportunities to shoulder responsibility and contribute to the community at local and global levels.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage:
 - make better use of the indoor and outdoor space to extend children's independent learning skills

- ensure that staff consistently exploit opportunities to extend children's knowledge and skills by getting involved in children's play and talking to them about the activities that they choose by themselves
- link the daily observations on children's learning more closely to the early learning goals and use this information consistently to plan their next learning steps.

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	L'Ecole Bilingue Elémentaire		
DCSF number	213/6393		
Unique Reference Number (URN)	134192		
Type of school	French/English bilingual day primary school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 2006		
Age range of pupils	3–11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 54	Girls: 59	Total: 113
Annual fees	£6,930		
Address of school	St David's Welsh Church St Mary's Terrace London W2 1SJ		
Telephone number	020 7224 8427		
Fax number	020 7224 8427		
Email address	lecolebilingue@hotmail.com		
Headteacher	Ms Véronique Ferreira		
Proprietors	Ms Véronique Ferreira & Mr Franck Laurans		
Reporting inspector	Mrs Michèle Messaoudi		
Date of inspection	11 February 2010		