

Wickham Court School

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number 305/6079
Unique reference number 134175
Inspection number 345383
Inspection dates 20–21 January 2010
Reporting inspector Susan Gadd HMI

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005

Age group: 2½ –16

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection 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.

Information about the school

Wickham Court School was opened in 2002 and is located in north Kent. It is a non-selective independent day school for children aged between two and a half and 16 years. It is divided into three departments: the early years, primary and senior departments. The senior department is a recent addition to the school and opened four years ago. There are 83 full time pupils and 19 part time pupils. The school's Early Years Foundation Stage provision consists of one Nursery and one Reception class. Currently it has eight children who do not meet the age requirements stated for Early Years Foundation Stage; the school has applied for registration relating to this provision. The school aims to provide 'an environment for learning that is safe and secure; one that is aesthetically enriching, and one that enables all pupils to reach their full potential'. The school is committed to 'educating the whole person and indeed, to helping pupils understand the importance of responsibility, compassion, fairness and honesty in all their endeavours'. Before and after school provision is available through the 'Austen Club' which is managed by the school. The school is part of the Schiller International University group, an independent educational organisation which owns schools and colleges in Europe and the United States of America. The last inspection was conducted by Ofsted in June 2007.

Evaluation of the school

Wickham Court School provides a satisfactory quality of education with some good features. The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good, whilst teaching and assessment, pupils' progress and the curriculum in the main school are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, the school has made significant progress in ensuring that all the regulations are now met. The school takes good steps to ensure that pupils feel safe, through its regard for pupils' health, welfare and safety and its good arrangements for safeguarding and child protection.

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

Quality of education

The quality of education overall is satisfactory. The curriculum is satisfactory. Detailed schemes of work have now been developed throughout the school. Based on the National Curriculum, the curriculum is broad and balanced and well planned.

The quality of provision within the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The youngest children receive good teaching, which results in good progress. The good curriculum is based on the early learning goals and caters well for the needs of the children. In the primary school, the emphasis is on the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills supported by a range of other subjects, some of which are taught by specialist teachers such as in art and French. Through the study of topics such as the Victorians and Romans, curricular links are beginning to be established between subjects and enriched through day visits to places of relevance. The availability of clubs is limited and centred around music, information and communication technology and some sporting activities such as football and netball. Pupils are able to attend the Austen Club before and after school which provides an adequate range of art and craft activities as well as games. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught mainly through assemblies and religious education lessons. The school is now in the process of considering ways of developing this in the taught curriculum as a discrete subject.

In the new senior school, schemes of work have been developed for all subject areas, including the teaching of PSHE to Years 7, 8 and 9. Many schemes are based on published material and examination materials from the Assessment and Qualification Alliance (AQA) and Edexcel. The GCSE options available to students are limited to traditional academic subjects rather than vocational courses. Students in Years 10 and 11 enjoy the opportunity to take part in work experience placements, which helps to build their confidence and deepen their understanding of different work placements. However, the school has yet to develop clearer links between the outcomes from work experience placements and how this may inform future career pathways. The school is in the process of considering ways of improving careers advice to students in supporting them to make the best choices for their next stage of education. Students feel well supported in preparation for their GCSE examinations.

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory overall. Teachers provide pupils with a caring environment in which to learn. Good relationships ensure that pupils are keen and eager to cooperate. Where teaching and assessment are strongest, teachers use good questions and prior assessment information to further develop pupils' knowledge and skills. A range of teaching strategies are used effectively, including a good use of learning support assistants to keep all pupils engaged and challenged. Consequently, in these lessons, behaviour is good and pupils make good progress. However, this good practice is not yet consistent across the school or between subjects. Where teaching and assessment are satisfactory, planning does not reflect pupils' prior ability and the work set does not always meet the needs of individuals. As result, in these lessons, pupils become restless and low-level chatter can impact

adversely on pupil concentration levels. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive satisfactory support from their learning support assistants. All of these pupils have appropriate targets set out in their individual education plans. These targets, although measurable, are not always sufficiently detailed.

In the primary school, pupils make satisfactory progress in most areas of learning and particularly in literacy and numeracy. This is because the school has not yet established consistently good teaching and the planning of pupils' work does not always make use of prior assessments. Consequently, pupils can find work either too difficult or too easy at times. However, pupils make good progress in their social skills as a result of the school's nurturing environment and particular attention to pupils' welfare needs.

In the relatively new senior school, although overall progress is satisfactory, students make good progress in art, mathematics and science. Students comment that this is a result of the good support they receive in completing their modular coursework and lessons are focused on meeting the expectations of GCSE syllabi.

Throughout the whole school, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, such as those with autism, physical disabilities and speech and language needs, make satisfactory progress as a result of the adequate support they receive.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. They understand the importance of respect and treating others with courtesy. They talk with pride about how they help each other and comment on the 'family feeling' within the school. Each year at Christmas, pupils enjoy singing carols at a local residential home. Pupils are very clear about the difference between right and wrong and have high expectations of how they treat one another. Pupils enjoy coming to school, as is seen in their good attendance. Overall, behaviour is satisfactory but in some situations it is good. For example, as pupils move around the school, there is a calm atmosphere where they show great consideration towards one another. The range of responsibilities they hold around the school such as being a monitor, school prefect or house captain, along with the various rewards for behaviour and achievement, help to develop their self-esteem and confidence. In religious education and in assemblies, pupils develop an awareness of other religions and enjoy learning about the different cultures around them. Through citizenship, pupils discuss the roles of various national and local institutions that help to support them in their community as well as throughout the country. Such experiences help to prepare them for their later adult lives and economic well-being.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Staff are highly committed to promoting pupils' welfare, health and safety and provision is good throughout the school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage. Arrangements for safeguarding and child protection are effective. Detailed information is kept on pupils' needs and the school works tirelessly to meet the needs of their most vulnerable pupils. Pupils are supervised well at all times and consequently feel very safe in school and know that they can turn to an adult for support or advice. A variety of risk assessments and staff training ensure that arrangements for pupils' welfare, health and safety are secure. Pupils have a clear understanding of the importance of staying healthy and enjoy their healthy snacks. The school fulfils the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school implements safe recruitment procedures and carries out all of the required checks on the suitability of the proprietor and staff. All of the regulations are met, including those relating to the maintenance of a single central register.

School's premises and accommodation

The school building is a Grade 1 listed building which provides an effective and safe environment for learning. The premises and accommodation are maintained appropriately and meet all of the regulations.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school makes appropriate provision for the dissemination of information for parents, carers and others. The school website and prospectus provides a range of information. This includes the school's policies and contact details in addition to information on its ethos and curriculum. Parents are invited to see all policies which are held at the school. Annual school reports provide appropriate detail to parents on their children's progress. Thirty-nine parents returned completed questionnaires to the inspectors and the vast majority were very positive about the work of the school.

Procedures for handling complaints

All of the regulations are met. The complaints policy is available on the school website.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision in Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Good induction arrangements help children settle happily to school and make a positive start to their education. The skills and abilities of children when they enter school are in line with those expected of children of this age. They make good progress in their learning, with the majority of children entering Year 1 with the necessary skills needed for their next stage of education. This is achieved as a result of good teaching, a well-planned curriculum and clear tracking of progress. The curriculum has been enhanced by adopting the new guidelines for this age group.

There is a good mix of child-initiated and teacher-led activities, supporting children's independence. Good relationships between adults and children enhance social skills. Effective links with parents help involve them in their children's education and keep them well informed of progress. Good care arrangements are in place to ensure children's safety and health are always under review.

The leader of the Foundation Stage has an accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for development. She is aware that the facilities outside are in need of refurbishment, in order to make learning outside more purposeful for the children. Children's learning and development is carefully planned in all the six areas of learning. Arrangements for linking planning between the age groups are not yet fully in place. Transition to the early morning and after school club is managed well by staff and children enjoy the relaxed atmosphere found in these settings.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Develop teaching and assessment so that pupils make consistently good progress across the school.
- Ensure that teachers match work to the needs of individual pupils by making more effective use of assessment information.

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	Wickham Court School		
DCSF number	305/6079		
Unique reference number	134175		
Type of school	Co-educational day school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 2002		
Age range of pupils	2½ –16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full time pupils)	Boys: 50	Girls: 33	Total: 83
Number on roll (part time pupils)	Boys: 8	Girls: 11	Total: 19
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 2	Girls: 2	Total: 4
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,550-£7,560		
Address of school	Schiller International Layhams Road West Wickham Kent BR4 9HN		
Telephone number	020 8777 2942		
Fax number	020 8777 4276		
Email address	wickham@schillerintschool.com		
Headteacher	Mrs B Hunter		
Proprietor	Mrs L Harries		
Reporting inspector	Susan Gadd HMI		
Dates of inspection	20–21 January 2010		