

Barbara Speake Stage School

Independent school inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Susan Gadd HMI

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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 Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Barbara Speake Stage School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged between three and 16 years of age. It was established in 1963 by Miss Speake the current proprietor and principal. It is managed by the headteacher and her nephew Mr David Speake. The school has carried out extensive building work around the original building so that all lessons now take place on the same site. There are currently 117 full-time pupils on roll. This includes nine children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The school aims to provide 'all our pupils with a consistently stimulating, supportive and nurturing environment in which to fulfil their creative and academic potential and to foster in them a spirit of confidence and self-reliance and the ability to work independently and cooperatively to achieve their ambitions'. A theatrical agency provides the opportunity for pupils to work professionally during their time at the school. The last full inspection was conducted by Ofsted in September 2007.

Evaluation of the school

Barbara Speake Stage School provides a satisfactory quality of education with some good and outstanding features. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and their spiritual, moral and social development is good. The quality of teaching and assessment, pupils' progress, the curriculum and the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. The school takes appropriate steps to ensure that pupils feel safe and makes suitable arrangements for safeguarding and child protection. Since the last inspection, the school has made significant progress in ensuring that all the regulations for independent schools are now met. Although the school successfully meets its aim of developing pupils' creative talents, it is still working towards meeting its academic aspirations for pupils.

Quality of education

The quality of education overall is satisfactory. The curriculum is satisfactory, with its main strengths in the creative and expressive arts. Since the last inspection, schemes of work based on the National Curriculum have been developed throughout the school; these are broad and balanced and appropriately planned. The school works hard to balance the provision of academic studies with the performing arts. Instead

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

of participating in clubs, pupils are provided with opportunities to perform for the general public at various theatres and to work with a variety of professional groups. This academic year some pupils have had the opportunity to attend school trips which enrich the curriculum. However, the school acknowledges that these are limited and is considering ways in which this can be improved.

The quality of provision within the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The youngest children receive satisfactory teaching, which results in satisfactory progress. The curriculum is based on the areas of learning and caters adequately for the needs of the children. In the primary school, the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills is supported by a range of other subjects, some of which, such as French, tap dancing, dance and drama, are taught by specialist teachers. The school is in the early stages of making links between subjects so that pupils' learning has a meaningful context and better meets the needs of individuals. This is working well in Key Stage 2 where pupils learn history, geography and design and technology through topics. The school is considering ways of developing this approach in other key stages. Since the last inspection, the school has introduced dedicated times for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and for lessons in citizenship.

In the senior school, schemes of work have been developed for all subjects. The schemes are generally based on National Curriculum documentation, published material and examination materials from the Assessment and Qualification Alliance (AQA). All pupils take dance examinations of the International Dance Teacher Association (IDTA) in ballet, tap, modern and jazz dance and musical theatre. In Key Stage 3, students are entered for Level 1 computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) examinations. The GCSE options available to pupils are limited to traditional academic subjects and to those linked to the performing arts rather than involving a broad range of vocational courses. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to take part in work-experience placements through their theatrical work which helps to build their confidence and deepen their understanding of professional settings. However, the school has yet to develop other opportunities for work placements beyond those related to the creative arts. During the inspection, a number of pupils stated that they felt this was an area that needed further development. As one pupil said, 'I may not go into theatre work and would like to experience working in other environments.' The school provides careers advice to pupils in Key Stage 4, supporting them to make the best choices for their next stage of education. Pupils feel well supported in preparation for their GCSE examinations.

Throughout the school, teaching and assessment are satisfactory. Teachers provide pupils with a caring environment in which to learn. Good relationships ensure that pupils are keen and eager to cooperate. Where teaching is strongest, teachers use precisely targeted questions and prior assessment information to further develop pupils' skills. In GCSE expressive arts and vocational performing arts the teaching is outstanding. Here, a range of teaching strategies is used to inspire and meet the needs of individuals. Pupils are knowledgeable about their own areas for development and use this information to improve their own skills. Teachers' detailed

subject knowledge helps pupils to make outstanding progress and lessons proceed at a brisk pace. However, this practice is not evident in other areas of the curriculum. Where teaching and assessment are satisfactory, planning does not closely reflect pupils' prior attainment and the work set does not always meet the needs of individuals. Consequently, some pupils are not challenged to achieve their best. The pace of lessons can be slow and opportunities are missed to develop pupils' knowledge and skills. As a result, in these lessons, progress is satisfactory. Assessment practice has been improved and there are now regular opportunities to assess progress. Some pupils talk about their targets but most are unsure of what they are. Marking in books is inconsistent throughout the school and across subjects. Where it is good, teachers ensure that pupils are aware of their 'next steps to learning'; however, this practice is limited.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers. Some receive one-to-one support through withdrawal which helps to reinforce and support their learning in the classroom. Although these pupils have appropriate targets, they are not always specific and systems for recording them are inconsistent across the school. Parents and pupils are involved in the setting of the targets but there is no formal system in place to ensure consistency of practice. Resources for teaching and learning in the expressive arts are of a high quality, with an extensive wardrobe of costumes. However, resources in the academic subjects are limited. Teachers work hard to ensure that this limitation does not hinder pupils' learning. The school is considering ways in which resources can be improved to further support teaching and learning in the academic curriculum.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral and social development of pupils is good for all age groups including the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils have a good understanding of the difference between right and wrong and the importance of school rules in keeping them safe. They work well in pairs and groups, cooperating with each other. Pupils enjoy school and attend regularly. Behaviour is outstanding in and around the school. One pupil stated: 'It's different here. We are a small school and we get on with each other. There is no fighting and if we fall out we just talk about it or go to a teacher.' Pupils are courteous, polite and were eager to share their views about the school, although opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities within the school and voice their own opinions are limited. Assemblies and circle times allow pupils to express their feelings. However, their understanding of other cultures is just satisfactory. The school does not teach religious education but pupils learn about a variety of cultures through curricular links. For example, when pupils studied India in geography they also explored the culture of India by tasting Indian food and considered some Hindu celebrations. However, this good practice is limited. The school is aware of the pupils' interest in developing this area of the curriculum further. Through the citizenship course, pupils discuss the roles of various national and local institutions that help to support them in their community as well as throughout the country. Recently, a prospective Member of Parliament visited the

school and pupils enjoyed the opportunity to ask questions. Such experiences help to prepare them for their adult lives and economic well-being.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Staff work hard to ensure that pupils are safe while at school. The full range of required policies is in place. The overall quality of provision for welfare, health and safety is satisfactory as there are some minor weaknesses in policies and the recording and reviewing of risk assessments. 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. They also understand the importance of a healthy diet and keeping fit; pupils exercise regularly through dance and tap.

The school fulfils the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

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 of checks.

School's premises and accommodation

The school building was originally a parish hall attached to a church. There have been significant extensions to the original building over the years. The premises and accommodation are maintained appropriately; provide a safe learning environment 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 provide a range of information. Parents are invited to see all the policies which are held at the school. Annual school reports provide appropriate detail to parents on their children's progress. Sixty-six parents returned completed questionnaires to the inspectors and the majority were positive about the work of the school. However, a significant number raised concerns about the lack of opportunities for pupils to enjoy trips and activities outside school.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's procedures for handling complaints meet all the requirements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Leadership, the quality of provision and the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Outcomes for children are satisfactory. Effective care arrangements are in place to ensure children's welfare, health and safety.

When children join the Nursery and Reception classes they start with a broad range of skills and abilities that vary from above those that might be expected for their age to below. Adults know and care for the children well. The teaching team has created the necessary links with parents to ensure a warm, caring environment in which children feel valued. Consequently, children settle into school life quickly and their confidence, self-esteem and independence are promoted well.

Adults take children's needs and interests into account when planning activities and the curriculum is supported through the use of a range of resources. The small indoor space is used well to support pupils' learning. The only outdoor space available is the school playground and the local park. The school is aware that the use of the outdoor area is limited and requires further development for both child-initiated and adult-led activities.

Adults observe all children when they first join the school and carry out initial assessments. These are used as a benchmark against which staff can measure each child's progress as well as identifying each child's needs and interests. Although children are assessed in each of the six areas of learning, not all assessments are transferred to the children's profiles in a timely manner. Observations carried out are detailed but are mainly descriptive rather than identifying the child's next steps to learning. Consequently, the use of assessment to inform the planning of activities for children is not yet fully developed. Children's progress varies from satisfactory to good with the majority of children making satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points.

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:

- improve the quality of teaching and the use of assessment data in the academic subjects so that individual pupils are challenged to achieve their best
- develop greater opportunities for pupils to learn about a range of cultures

- provide greater opportunities for pupils to enrich their learning through improving resources for the academic subjects and extending the number and range of educational visits
- develop the use of the outdoor learning environment in the Early Years Foundation Stage to support child-initiated and adult-led learning.

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	Barbara Speake Stage School		
DCSF number	307/6050		
Unique reference number (URN)	101948		
Type of school	Specialist stage school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1963		
Age range of pupils	3 ½ –16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 49	Girls:68	Total:117
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,400–5,700		
Address of school	East Acton Lane East Acton London W3 7EG		
Telephone number	0208 743 1306		
Fax number	0208 743 2746		
Email address	Speakekids3@aol.com		
Headteacher	Mr David Speake		
Proprietor	Miss Barbara M. Speake MBE		
Reporting inspector	Susan Gadd HMI		
Dates of inspection	16–17 June 2010		