

Kitebrook House

Independent school inspection report

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URN for registered childcare and social care	13037
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Reporting inspector	Mark Lindfield 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 Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The inspection of registered provision³ was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.⁴

Information about the school

Kitebrook House was previously inspected in June 2007 and has since changed ownership. The new proprietor is Cothill Educational Trust. The present headteacher was appointed in January 2009. The school opened in 1955 and is a co-educational preparatory school for boys and girls aged from three to 13 years. It occupies two substantial properties near Moreton-in-Marsh and currently provides for 89 pupils. The pre-preparatory department is based at Hillside, and includes two Early Years Foundation Stage classes with 10 part-time children on roll in the Nursery and nine children in the Reception class. 13 Early Years Foundation Stage children receive nursery grant funding. Kitebrook House houses the preparatory department for pupils aged from seven to 13. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Weekly and flexible boarding is available for pupils in the preparatory department. The school aims to: 'Look at each child's needs and each child's potential, and to provide a secure and loving – yet challenging – background in which all the children can fully thrive and develop.'

Evaluation of the school

Kitebrook House meets its aims and provides a satisfactory standard of education. The quality of the curriculum is good, as are the teaching and assessment throughout the school. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils is outstanding, as is their behaviour. Although several regulations are not met, the school has improved many of its policies and procedures since the last inspection: it has introduced a clear framework to assess pupils' work, improved its complaints procedures, developed communication with parents and produced policies to promote good behaviour and to deter bullying. The Early Years Foundation Stage provides a good learning environment for children. However, the school's safeguarding arrangements lack rigour and are inadequate; there are omissions in the checks made on staff prior to their appointment and as a result the welfare,

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

³ Schools which provide childcare for children from birth until the term in which they reach their third birthday must register this provision separately with Ofsted.

⁴ www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2006/ukpga_20060021_en_4#pt3-ch2-pb4-l1g49

safety and health arrangements and the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage are also inadequate.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards. It is broad and balanced and matches the needs of the pupils well. It ensures that teachers have high expectations of pupils' learning potential and personal development. In Years 1 to 8 all subjects of the National Curriculum are taught, as well as religious education. These include personal, health and social education and citizenship. Currently, this area of the curriculum lacks co-ordination and a scheme of work, although most aspects are covered through lessons, class discussions and daily acts of worship helping pupils to excel in these areas. There is an appropriate amount of time allocated to all subjects. Pupils have good opportunities to participate in practical and investigative work, and the strong emphasis, from the earliest age, on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills helps to create very articulate and confident speakers. The curriculum is enhanced by the inclusion of French in all year groups with opportunities for pupils to spend a term at a school in France. The curriculum ensures that literacy skills are developed in all subjects and this is particularly evident in work seen in history, geography and science. Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught throughout the school as a discrete subject and is increasingly being used to support learning across the curriculum. This is a particular strength in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Pupils talk enthusiastically about opportunities in music, drama and physical education. From the earliest age all children are able to receive swimming lessons. Pupils' learning experiences are enhanced by a comprehensive programme of visits which include theatres, museums and places of worship, as well as by expert visitors to the school. During the inspection pupils attended a week long residential workshop in collaboration with the Natural History Museum where they collected and analysed scientific data. The school day is enriched by a wide range of after-school activities, which cater for a variety of interests and talents and include a Saturday sports club.

Teaching and assessment are good. Teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage and across the school set high expectations of pupils and provide tasks that consistently challenge pupils and help them to make good progress. There are excellent relationships between adults and pupils which create a pleasant and productive learning environment. In this warm and supportive environment pupils are willing to contribute and grow in self-confidence and display extremely positive attitudes at all times. The school provides an increasingly good range of resources, especially for reading and in the new science facilities and computer suites which are nearing completion. Teachers show good subject knowledge and use questions to develop pupils' thinking well. This encourages pupils to provide articulate and thoughtful responses from an early age and as a result they make very good progress in speaking and listening. The high standards of artwork on display in both buildings help to create a lively and attractive backdrop. The small class sizes allow teachers to develop a good understanding of individual pupils' levels of knowledge

and skills. The school's recent introduction of a marking policy has ensured that there is now an agreed assessment framework allowing national comparisons of academic standards and progress. However these assessments are not as yet consistently used to inform planning and teaching.

At both school sites, learning support teachers identify and show good understanding of the nature of pupils' additional needs. Staff regularly prepare individual education plans to ensure that work is well matched to the needs of pupils. Where these targets are precise and contain short time scales they are used effectively by teachers in lessons to help pupils make more rapid progress.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school places a strong focus on building pupils' confidence and raising their self-esteem from the moment they arrive which helps pupils in their longer-term economic well-being. The success of this is strongly evident in lessons and in assemblies. They enjoy school life and they demonstrate this in their good attendance and enthusiasm for their work and for a range of other activities. There are excellent relationships between pupils and adults and between the pupils themselves. Consequently, behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding. Lunchtime is a convivial affair when pupils and adults sit together in a relaxed atmosphere. Pupils develop a firm understanding of the difference between right and wrong and are strongly aware of the impact of their behaviour on others. The comprehensive programme of personal, health and social and citizenship education ensures that pupils are aware of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles and to stay safe. The rich curriculum supports their understanding of their own and other cultures through literature, art and music and through the high profile of French in the school.

Pupils are keen to take on responsibility and make a substantial contribution to the life of the school. They help to organize fund-raising activities for a range of charities. All pupils recently contributed to the 'We are Writers' publication. Others become team captains and many represent their school in sporting fixtures. Pupils make considerable contributions in school assemblies which strongly support all aspects of their personal development and provide good opportunities for reflection and spiritual growth. On the first day of the inspection pupils in Years 3 and 4 showed very impressive understanding of the processes leading up to the formation the previous day of the new coalition government, reflecting their good awareness of public institutions and services.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

This welfare, health and safety of the school are inadequate because of a number of omissions and failings in the procedures which relate to care and safeguarding of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils in the main school. The new proprietors and headteacher are aware of the majority of these issues and have begun to address several areas. Staff show good levels of care on a daily basis, they build good relationships, show concern and provide a sympathetic ear to all pupils.

Pupils have good awareness of how to stay healthy and safe and particularly appreciate the school's healthy and nutritious meals. Arrangements for ensuring the suitability of staff have improved. However there are a number of checks that are incomplete and have yet to be rectified. In line with the school's policy the majority of staff have received appropriate child protection training, although a small number of more recently appointed staff have yet to complete this training. While implementing more thorough fire safety awareness the school's recent fire safety assessment undertaken by the county fire service found a number of deficiencies which the school is addressing. The school's procedures for educational trips and visits do not comply with government guidance on appropriate levels of risk. Checks on portable electrical appliances at Kitebrook House were last completed in February 2009. The school's newly appointed secretary has made good progress in compiling an admissions list in line with regulations but there were a number of omissions at the time of the inspection. The school has made suitable adjustments to increase accessibility at the main site with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and will be drawing up a further plan to review the possibility of further improving access.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has completed all appropriate checks on proprietors and has introduced more robust procedures for checks on new staff appointments. However, in the case of those members of staff appointed since 2003 not all checks are in place as required and not all are recorded in the single central register.

School's premises and accommodation

The school's grounds contain an excellent range of large play equipment and many natural features that are a source of delight to many pupils. Children from the Early Years Foundation Stage enjoy the opportunities to climb, shelter and clamber. The school has spent time and money in carefully refurbishing and redecorating the interior of the two schools. It has made major repairs to the roof at Hillside and is soon to complete and equip three impressive new classrooms with facilities for art, science and information technology. The premises are well lit and well ventilated and together with the resources and equipment are safe and suitable for the learning needs of all pupils.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They appreciate the school's qualities and the thoughts of many are echoed in the words of one parent who writes that 'the school has vastly improved my children's confidence and self-belief'. The headteacher has improved the arrangements for reporting to parents and these now provide clear information on pupils' academic and personal progress termly for older pupils and bi-annually for Hillside pupils and children. The school's prospectus and newly opened website contain much of the necessary information. There are clear links on the website to the school's policies on admissions, behaviour and

safeguarding. The school intends to use the website to share particulars of pupils' academic performance from the previous year, which has not been the case hitherto.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has produced a clear complaints procedure which meets all but one of the requirements. This procedure is available to parents on the school's website. The school reports that there have been no formal complaints in the previous academic year.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness and the leadership and management of the setting is inadequate because the school's checks on the suitability of staff are incomplete. However, with local authority support, leaders have begun improvements based on a more accurate assessment of their strengths and weaknesses. Staff show a good understanding of each child and respond sensitively to their individual needs. Children's behaviour is excellent; they show great care and consideration for each other. They develop a strong spiritual appreciation through assemblies and daily prayers. The warm and welcoming ethos extends to parents who are kept well informed through the daily reading journals.

Outcomes are good, as a wide range of activities and resources encourage children to express their ideas and opinions and as a result they make good progress in developing their communication and thinking skills, as in their early reading and writing skills. Their interest in books is evident and many succeed in working above national expectations in these areas by the time they reach Year 1. The good provision is further enhanced by specialist music and physical education. Particularly good use is made of ICT, with young children confidently using interactive whiteboards, controlling electronic cars and using a camera to record their work.

Children move freely into and out from a tiled area and enjoy a sandpit and water chutes, although there are relatively few outdoor resources to encourage mathematical and language development, notwithstanding a developing outdoor area. The recording procedures for administering medicines do not fully comply with regulations.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.⁵

⁵ www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.htm

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- provide all teaching and residential staff with child protection training (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- prepare and implement a written policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school which has regard to DCSF guidance Health and safety of pupils on educational visits (paragraph 3(2)(c))
- ensure that all actions arising from the Oxford County Council Fire and Rescue Service fire assessment of March 2010 are addressed and resolved (paragraph 3(5))
- maintain an admission register which includes all of the required details (paragraph 3(9)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- for all education and boarding staff appointments (including volunteers) from 1 September 2003, ensure the completion of all appropriate checks to confirm their suitability (paragraph 4(2)(a), (b) and (e))
- ensure that no person supplied by an employment business (including an agency) to the school should begin work at the school unless the proprietor has received written confirmation from the employment business (paragraph 4A(3–5))
- ensure that the proprietor checks the identity of any staff not directly employed by the school before they begin work at the school irrespective of any check made by the employment business and include these in the contractual arrangements (paragraph 4A(6))
- ensure that the proprietor includes in any contractual arrangements with an employment business, the requirements set out in paragraph 4A(3), including a requirement to supply a copy of a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) certificate that contains any information (paragraph 4A(7))
- for each member of staff in post on or after 1 September 2003, ensure that the register shows that all the appropriate checks were made (paragraph 4C(2) and (3))
- in relation to staff not directly employed by the school, ensure that the register shows whether written notification has been received from the employment business that it has carried out the checks referred to in 4C(2) (paragraph 4C(4))
- in relation to staff not directly employed by the school, where notification is received from an employment business that it has obtained an enhanced CRB certificate which contains disclosures, ensure that the register shows whether the employment business supplied a copy of that certificate (paragraph 4C(5)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- provide particulars of pupils' academic performance from the previous year (paragraph 6(3)(e)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of procedures for handling complaints (standard 7) and must:

- provide a member on the appeals committee who is independent from the school and management (paragraph 7(g)).

In order to comply with the welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the school must:

- ensure that it maintains a central record of any medicines administered by staff to children.

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	Kitebrook House		
DCSF number	931/6118		
Unique reference number (URN)	132013		
EY URN (for registered childcare only)	597408		
Type of school	Pre-preparatory and preparatory school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1955		
Age range of pupils	3–13		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 29	Girls: 50	Total: 79
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 7	Girls: 3	Total: 10
Number of boarders	Boys: 5	Girls: 20	Total: 25
Annual fees (day pupils)	£11,070		
Annual fees (boarders)	£13,770		
Address of school	Moreton-in-Marsh Gloucestershire GL56 0RP		
Telephone number	01608 674350		
Fax number	01608 674887		
Email address	office@kitebrookhouse.com		
Headteacher	Ms Pippa Quarrell		
Proprietor	Cothill Educational Trust		
Reporting inspector	Mark Lindfield HMI		
Dates of inspection	12–13 May 2010		