

Kestrel House

Independent school progress monitoring inspection report

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

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.^{1,2}

The inspection was conducted at the request of the Registration Authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan following the previous inspection.

Information about the school

Kestrel House School is an independent special school which was registered in September 2008 and is situated in a residential area of North London. The school's premises are a large, detached, former stage school and they provide education for up to 50 pupils aged from three to 16 years. Currently, there are 23 pupils on roll, aged between four and 13, including two children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Almost all have statements of special educational needs, mostly related to autism, although some have additional learning and behavioural needs. Some have experienced significant periods out of full-time education prior to attending this school and their attainment on entry to the school is well-below average. The vast majority of pupils are referred by local authorities in London and the Home Counties. The school is part of the Eagle House Group.

The school has experienced a large turnover of staff in the last year. Pending the appointment of a new headteacher and deputy headteacher, the senior leadership currently comprises an interim headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher.

The school's vision is 'to extend to all pupils an irresistible invitation to learn, to motivate and engage them in all social, communication and academic activities where they are valued for their individuality, strengths, and challenges so that they may be happy and successful members of society'.

Context of the inspection

The school was inspected in December 2009 when a number of regulations were identified as not being met. The school submitted an action plan to address these in March 2010 but this had a number of shortcomings. A second action plan was submitted in April 2010 and accepted in May 2010. This is the first monitoring visit to the school to check the progress made in implementing its action plan.

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

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

The inspection report of December 2009 identified that schemes of work had been subject to revision but that this work was not yet complete, so that the schemes did not meet requirements. Work to update, complete and refine policies and schemes of work has been completed ahead of schedule and these have been implemented from the start of this school year (September 2010). The new schemes of work, which include a strong focus on developing pupils' communication skills, indicate areas where teachers can develop their planning to pursue pupils' interests and also increase the opportunities for cross-curricular links between subjects. Senior leaders are undertaking a planned programme of observations and scrutiny to monitor the implementation of the new policies and schemes. Observations during this visit indicate that satisfactory account is being taken of pupils' needs. This regulation is now met.

At the time of the last inspection report, the school's programme of careers education and guidance for pupils in Year 9 and above was not yet fully implemented. The school has recently implemented a scheme of work for students' personal, social and health education and citizenship, which will ultimately lead to ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) accredited awards, from the start of this school year. Elements of careers education are included in this provision but links with outside agencies and training for staff have yet to be established. This requirement is not yet met.

The inspection report identified that newer staff knew the pupils less well and their teaching lacked the precision evident in the better lessons. The school has experienced a significant turnover in staff during the past year. Senior leaders have now put in place a programme of training. Although at an early stage of development, evidence of the training undertaken to date indicates that a secure start has been made in identifying the needs of both staff and pupils in order to target training most appropriately. A new format for summarising individual pupils' aptitudes, needs and prior attainment is readily accessible to staff, and forms a sound basis for lesson planning. Staff are aware of the school's requirements for planning and assessing pupils' ongoing progress. Staff have a satisfactory understanding of pupils' aptitudes and attainments, and the quality of planning is satisfactory. The senior leadership is implementing a programme of monitoring and support for staff, although at a very early stage of implementation, the work undertaken so far is effective. This requirement is now met.

At the time of the inspection, there was insufficient equipment for practical science and design and technology investigations. Computer programs to support pupils' specific learning difficulties had recently been ordered but were not available. The use of interactive whiteboards to aid learning was underdeveloped in some classrooms. The school has established a central store of specialist science and other subject equipment. In design and technology, a specialist teaching area has been

established and, again, there is a central store of resources available to support the curriculum. The resources available are sufficient in quantity, of good quality, and accessible to staff. Computers are available in all classrooms and there is planned access for all pupils to use appropriate programs to support their learning. There are interactive whiteboards in each teaching room and these are used regularly.

The inspection report identified that the school had not carried out fire drills during the school day to ensure that pupils were familiar with evacuation procedures. The new leadership team has instigated fire drills during the school day from September 2010. They have held two fire drills already this term, one announced and one unannounced. As part of the preparations for these, staff and pupils have been briefed about escape routes, assembly points and conduct. The leadership team propose to hold further fire drills this term to ensure that pupils and staff are familiar with routines. The school's fire log and other records are now regularly and fully completed.

At the time of the inspection, it was found that the flooring in most rooms was unsuitable for wet activities and had deteriorated as a result of excessive staining. The relevant regulation has not yet been met. Although some work has been carried out, the school did not complete its proposed actions within the agreed timescale. A rolling programme of renewal and improvement is now being implemented but this has yet to be completed.

The inspection report identified that the school did not send financial information annually to referring local authorities in respect of income received and expenditure incurred on behalf of pupils from those authorities registered at the school. The required financial information returns are now sent out by the proprietorial body's group finance department and this is monitored by the school.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

As a result of this inspection, the school must take action to meet The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010³ ('the Regulations'), as follows:

- provide appropriate careers guidance for secondary aged pupils (paragraph 2(2)(g))
- ensure that all flooring is appropriate and in good condition (paragraph 23(r)).

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special		
Date school opened	September 2008		
Age range of pupils	3–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 19	Girls: 4	Total: 23
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 19	Girls: 4	Total: 23
Annual fees (day pupils)	£48,557		
Address of school	104 Crouch Hill London N8 9EA		
Telephone number	020 8348 8500		
Email address	admin@kestrelhouseschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Thorne (Interim headteacher)		
Proprietor	The Eagle House Group		