

Heath House Preparatory School

Independent school light-touch inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Susan Gadd

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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, 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.^{1, 2}

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

Heath House Preparatory School is a non-selective independent primary day school for boys and girls aged between four and 11 years. It is located in two separate buildings in Blackheath, in south east London. The school was first established in 1993 by the current proprietor and her husband. Pupils from a wide range of cultural and ethnic heritage backgrounds attend the school, around a half being of white British heritage. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, there are currently 16 children, none of whom are in receipt of government nursery funding. There are currently no children with a statement of special educational needs. There are a few pupils for whom English is an additional language and several with special educational needs. The school is registered to take 80 pupils and currently has 102 on roll; consequently, a material change was requested by the Department for Education as part of this inspection to increase the registered number to 102. The school provides an after-school club.

The school's ultimate aim is to prepare pupils for 11 plus entrance exams into grammar and independent schools. This aim is supported by the school's ethos which is based on children receiving a good 'all round' education, helping pupils to progress to the next stage of their education with self-esteem, self-confidence and resilience. The school motto is 'Give me a place to stand and I will move the earth.' The school was last inspected in November 2007.

Evaluation of the school

Heath House Preparatory School successfully meets its aims in the majority of instances. The overall quality of education provided for pupils is good. It is good in Key Stages 1 and 2 as a result of a good curriculum, good teaching and the good progress pupils make by the time they leave the school. However, the welfare, health and safety of pupils are inadequate. This is because safeguarding procedures

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

are not robust, recruitment checks have not been conducted according to requirements and some associated key policies have not been sufficiently developed or are not in place. Although the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is inadequate, children make satisfactory progress because of the good quality of pastoral care that all children receive and the satisfactory teaching. The school has addressed the regulations not met at the last inspection and maintained a good quality of education. However since the last inspection some regulations are no longer met in welfare health and safety including some in the Early Year Foundation Stage. In addition the school does not meet some of the regulations related to the premises as there are an insufficient number of toilets available for pupils, facilities for pupils who are ill do not meet requirements and some classrooms are too small for the number of pupils. Consequently, the school's request to increase the number of pupils they are registered to accept has been declined.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good overall but inadequate in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The curriculum in practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage does not always reflect the six areas of learning in sufficient detail and consequently children's experiences in some areas are inconsistent. There are limited opportunities for planned purposeful play and exploration both indoors and outside.

Where the curriculum is good, it provides pupils with a range of academic studies with a strong emphasis on physical activities and sports during the afternoon. In Key Stages 1 and 2, this curriculum is supported by a good range of residential trips. This year, pupils will be visiting Switzerland, Brussels and Athens as part of their studies. Much of the curriculum is based on the National Curriculum and published schemes of work are used to ensure pupils' planned learning is progressive as they move through the school. Pupils have an opportunity to study a range of languages such as Classical Greek, Japanese, Spanish and French while also studying history, geography, science, English, information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics, music, drama and religious studies. Resources such as interactive whiteboards are not always used to full effect to develop pupils' learning. Wherever possible, links between subjects are made. Pupils attending the after-school provision have an opportunity to complete their homework and to seek academic advice from adults.

Personal, social and health education prepares pupils well for their adult life and is incorporated into the curriculum. Pupils have had the opportunity to meet representatives from local businesses and a high court judge, as well as the police and members of the fire and rescue service. Pupils take on a range of jobs around the school to support each other, such as house captains, prefects and games captains. Year 6 particularly enjoy the responsibilities attached to being prefects and take their roles seriously; as one child stated, 'You have to set an example to others.' Teaching and assessment are good. Features of the good-quality teaching include teachers' skilful use of questioning to assess pupils' understanding of concepts and a

good understanding of pupils' interests. In one lesson, the teacher's knowledge of the books a pupil enjoyed reading helped to develop the pupil's understanding of writing styles. In the best lessons, planning takes account of pupils' prior learning and, as a result, activities and questioning are suitably tailored to meet the needs of individual pupils. In lessons where learning is practical, pupils have good opportunities to share their ideas and engage with others. When marking is good, pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve their work. However, this good practice is not embedded across the whole school and work set does not always meet individual needs well. In some lessons, there is an over reliance on the use of worksheets and, as a result, the pace of lessons slows.

The school has a strong ethos on meeting the needs of individuals through additional mentoring outside class time. This effective intervention ensures that pupils with specific needs and those who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to their peers.

Teaching and outcomes in Reception are satisfactory. The opportunities for children to make learning choices for themselves and to engage in, share responsibility for, and make decisions about their learning is occasionally limited to a morning session whilst the children have free play.

A feature of all lessons, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, is the high quality relationships formed between staff and pupils. Progress is good overall, especially in English, mathematics, and verbal and non-verbal reasoning, but is inconsistent in some other subjects and classes. Assessment information is gathered regularly from each of these areas and is enhanced by pupils' self-assessments and through the setting of targets in English and mathematics. For the last 10 years all pupils succeed in gaining entry into the secondary schools of their choice.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development including the personal development of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and this is reflected in their good behaviour, very positive attitudes to work and very good attendance. Strong, caring and secure relationships are evident throughout school and help boost pupils' confidence and belief in themselves. As one parent stated, 'the school is wonderful at meeting the needs of individuals and my child has flourished because of this.' Pupils know that they can share their views about school with the staff and are proud that their contributions have led, for example, to changes in school lunches. However, they say they would like a more formal mechanism by which their views could be considered. Pupils' cultural development is strong and, through the curriculum, they learn about their own culture and those of others through studying a variety of religions. For example, during Chinese New Year, pupils made dragons and lanterns and paraded through the village, and enjoyed Chinese food at school. Pupils contribute to their community and beyond through regularly raising large sums of money for a variety of charities

and by singing at Christmas to the residents in a local care home. Pupils are well prepared for their future economic well-being and the next stage of their education as a result of their good personal development and their strong grasp of good basic skills in English and mathematics.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The school's provision for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety, including for the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, is inadequate. Procedures to complete the appropriate checks on staff prior to their appointment are insufficiently robust in a minority of cases at the time of inspection and therefore do not comply with requirements. In addition some policies such as the child protection policy are not always detailed enough. All policies and procedures required for the safe and efficient management of the setting are not in place and not shared with parents. Not all staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage have the appropriate qualifications for this provision. However, risk assessments and other safeguarding training for staff meet requirements. The school is effective in providing a good quality of pastoral care for its pupils, including for those children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This ensures that pupils are able to work and play feeling safe and secure. Pupils are clear about the importance of being healthy and enjoy the many sporting activities available during the afternoons and through the after-school clubs. Pupils are supervised appropriately at lunchtime and breaks and enjoy going onto the Heath. The school is aware that pupils would like to use the Heath more often at break times regardless of the bad weather. The school meets all of the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the setting and the provision are inadequate as the provision does not fully follow requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Partnerships with parents are good and parents value the good quality pastoral care, which meets their children's needs. Children make good progress in their communication and language skills as well as in their calculating and social skills as a result of focused teaching and additional intervention when required. However, progress overall is only satisfactory as not all areas of the required curriculum are consistently given appropriate emphasis. Teaching is satisfactory. However, many activities are adult led and children lack the appropriate balance of activities to encourage them to initiate their own learning. Assessments are varied in quality and activities are not always closely linked to children's individual needs. Children have regular tests in English and mathematics which inform future planning but staff infrequently carry out formal observations of children during lesson time to inform their next steps to learning. As a result, even though children enjoy their time at school and develop good personal skills, as shown in their good behaviour, overall outcomes are only satisfactory.

Leadership and management are inadequate because of failings in meeting welfare, health and safety requirements. The ratios of adults to children meets requirements but there are insufficient adults with the required qualifications. In addition, some key policies have not been developed. All staff have completed the required first aid and child protection training and risk assessments are appropriate.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.³

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

- ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and have regard to the guidance issued by the Secretary of State by ensuring that the Child Protection policy and training and procedures for safer recruitment are carried out. (paragraph 7).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of staff, supply staff, and proprietors (standards in part 4) and must:

- verify that no member of staff is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups act 2006 (paragraph 19(2)(a))
- ensure that the proprietor carries out an enhanced criminal records bureau (CRB) check for any member of staff appointed from 1 September 2003 and that the appointment to position at the school is subject to this check which should be obtained before or as soon as practicable after the person's appointment (paragraph 19(2)(c))
- ensure that appointments made from 1 May 2007 where a person for whom, by reason of living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, further checks have been made as the proprietor considers appropriate which have regard to the guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 19(2)(d))
- ensure that the single central register identifies if a person is not barred from regulated activity relating to children who was appointed before, on or after 1 May 2007 through conducting a List 99 inquiry. (paragraphs 22(3) and 22(4)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises of and accommodation at schools (standards in part 5) and must:

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made

- have regard for the age, number and needs of pupils such that all classrooms are of an appropriate size (paragraph 23(i))
- ensure there are a sufficient number of toilets to meet the age and number of pupils (paragraph 23(j))
- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, in accordance with regulation 5 of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 23(k)).

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

- plan consistently for all of the required six areas of learning.

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

- develop all policies as set down in the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage
- ensure that there are a sufficient number of suitably qualified adults.

Inspection judgements

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 (*delete table if there is no such provision*)

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage			√	
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage				√
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage				√
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage				√

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Preparatory		
Date school opened	1993		
Age range of pupils	4–11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 62	Girls: 40	Total: 102
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 9,900-£10,500		
Address of school	37 Wemyss Road, Blackheath, London SE3 0TG		
Telephone number	020 8297 1900		
Email address	info@heathhouseprepschool.com		
Headteacher	Mrs Sophia Laslett		
Proprietor	Mrs Sophia Laslett		