

Dolphin School (Incorporating Noah's Ark Nursery Schools)

Independent school standard inspection report

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URN for registered childcare	EY240307
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Reporting inspector	Mike Thirkell

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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}

The inspection of registered provision was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.^{3, 4}

Information about the school

Dolphin School (incorporating Noah's Ark Nursery Schools) is an independent co-educational primary school with a Christian foundation, catering for pupils from two to eleven years of age. The school is registered for 262 pupils and there are currently 262 boys and girls attending, who are from a range of ethnic heritages. A total of 145 pupils, of whom 91 receive government funding, attend the Early Years Foundation Stage settings, including 35 aged 2–3 and 76 aged 4 – 5 in the nurseries and 34 aged 4–5 in the Reception classes. The school was established in 1986 and operates from four sites. Dolphin School occupies the greater part of the Northcote Road, Baptist Church building in South West London and the nurseries are located in three other local churches. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs and a further 23 are identified by the school as requiring additional support for varying degrees of learning difficulties. Eleven pupils speak English as an additional language. The school aims 'to find and release children's potential in academic study, creative endeavour and sporting pursuit and to develop their character according to a Christian understanding of what it means to be human'. The school was last inspected by Ofsted in February 2007.

Evaluation of the school

Dolphin School (incorporating Noah's Ark Nursery School) is a successful school which meets its aims; it benefits from the strong and charismatic leadership provided by senior management and the unanimous support of parents. The school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage settings, provides a good quality of education overall. The curriculum is outstanding. Teachers work hard to make lessons both interesting and fun, so that children enjoy learning. This is reflected in outstanding behaviour and the outstanding progress made academically and personally by pupils of all ages and abilities. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding, reflecting the school's Christian foundation and values. Pupils

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

are very well cared for and policies and practice relating to their welfare, health and safety including safeguarding are outstanding. The school has made further progress since the previous inspection by Ofsted and meets all the requirements for registration as an independent school.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding and meets the needs of all pupils, including those who experience varying degrees of special educational needs. It provides outstanding opportunities for all pupils to learn and make progress and prepares them well for the next stage of their education by placing a strong basis on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy. An imaginative approach to planning, for example through the use of themed days when each classroom is decorated to inspire imaginative writing, and the extensive range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities ensure that pupils have many opportunities to develop their speaking skills. The quality of creative writing has improved significantly since the last inspection. The excellent relationships between teachers and their pupils throughout the school are key factors in ensuring that pupils are listened to and that they learn to listen to the views of others.

The curriculum provision includes all the required areas of learning, including science and humanities. Planning documents and schemes of work reflect the careful consideration given to all pupils' needs, including those who have special educational needs. Strong emphasis is given to language development; pupils in the nursery are introduced to French, from Years 1 to 6 all pupils learn Spanish and in Year 6 pupils take Latin. Music and drama are taken by all pupils. Two drama productions are undertaken each academic year. From Year 3, pupils take a course in verbal and non-verbal reasoning. Pupils with special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language, receive carefully planned support. Statements of special educational needs are appropriately and regularly reviewed.

Games and physical education (PE) are strong features of the school curriculum. Pupils confirm that they enjoy PE and games, that they have the opportunity to play a range of sports, including hockey, soccer, netball and tag-rugby and that they regularly play in teams against other schools. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is provided through the school's 'Life Education' course, which includes elements of religious education and Bible studies. Pupils have rich opportunities for creative work. Computers are available throughout the school and the school has a clear written rationale for their general use in the curriculum, but has not yet completed all the plans to identify where their use is most relevant within all subjects.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good; it includes a number of outstanding features. Teachers plan their lessons effectively and manage learning activities skilfully, supported by the invariably excellent relationships in classes. Well-structured lessons ensure that pupils are able to make the best progress according to

their ability. Teachers are well qualified and enthusiastic and specialist staff are available for a number of subjects, including PE, music, modern languages and drama. The high quality of teaching is supported effectively by the dedicated work of the learning assistants, who work well with pupils. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make outstanding progress.

Teachers have high expectations of what all pupils can achieve. Pupils are challenged to do their best, supported by teachers' positive responses and encouragements. Questioning is used effectively to challenge the most able and to encourage those pupils who may at times lack confidence. The best of teachers' questioning asks pupils to express their opinions and views and to deduce answers from previous learning, although occasionally pupils have too few opportunities to contribute and a few begin to lose interest. A good range of resources is available. Simple resources are well prepared and used effectively, for example in a Year 4 lesson where a teapot, ice cubes and plastic cups were used effectively to study heat transfer and insulation. Pupils who have special educational needs or who require help with their developing English skills receive carefully planned support in the classroom and, where necessary, individual help from specialist staff.

Procedures and practice for monitoring and assessing pupils' progress have improved since the previous inspection and are outstanding throughout the school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, underpinned by the excellent knowledge that teachers have of pupils' individual needs. The small size of classes ensures that teachers are able to speak to pupils about their work regularly. The school's expectations for the assessment of progress are clearly set out and consistently applied by teachers. Pupils' exercise books are marked regularly and written feedback is usually well matched to their ages. Systems for tracking the progress of each individual pupil are thorough, supported by testing and analysis of data. Teachers keep good individual information about pupils' progress, while information held by the school centrally, including that derived from monitoring and tests, is shared effectively and regularly with teachers to support their planning.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, is outstanding. It is supported by the extensive range of learning experiences provided through the curriculum, enrichment activities and personal development, which reflect the Christian ethos and values of the school, and prepare pupils well for their future lives. The positive relationships in the school encourage pupils of all ages and abilities to develop self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. Pupils' spirituality is developed through opportunities to learn about Christian teachings as well as being encouraged to develop a sense of wonder at the world around them. They are encouraged to distinguish between right and wrong through the guidance and good example of their teachers. They receive good moral guidance through the use of stories and reference to parables in assemblies, while

visits to the school by local police officers support the development of respect for the law.

Behaviour is outstanding, supported by clear and consistent expectations set by staff. Pupils show initiative and make significant contributions to community life in their school, the local and wider communities. All pupils are given opportunities to take a wide range of responsibilities in their class or throughout the school, for example as class monitors. Pupils participate in an extensive range of activities to raise funds for charities. Links developed with local schools include a Jewish school, enabling pupils to gain some first-hand knowledge of the differences and similarities of different faiths and traditions. This, along with other curriculum experiences, including elements of humanities and religious education, promotes the development of attitudes of tolerance and harmony. Visits to museums and a wide range of other venues, including the local library, provide pupils with a broad knowledge of public institutions in England. Pupils of all ages enjoy coming to school, as reflected in the high attendance figures.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Pupils are well cared for and the quality of measures employed by the school to promote their welfare, health and safety are outstanding. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthy food and all take regular exercise. All required policies and procedures to safeguard pupils, including staff checks, are appropriate and implemented effectively. Policies are meticulously prepared, including in relation to health and safety, child-protection and safety on trips out of school. Procedures relating to first aid and safeguarding are supported by key members of staff who are appropriately trained, including with regard to the Early Years Foundation Stage. A policy relating to bullying is in place, but pupils confirm that instances of bullying are rare. Clear guidance is provided in relation to discipline and behaviour and records are kept of the rare occasions when sanctions have been imposed. Admission and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with requirements. All aspects of fire protection, including risk assessments, are implemented effectively and checks are made in line with the latest requirements. There are suitable arrangements to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school implements all the requirements for undertaking checks on staff, and registers containing all the required information are carefully maintained.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school makes good use of its complex premises. Classrooms and other parts of the school are maintained in a good repair, are clean and in good decorative order. Good use is made of the available space to provide a stimulating learning environment, enhanced by the excellent use of display to support learning and to celebrate pupils' achievements. All classrooms are of suitable size for the number of pupils using them and are furnished appropriately. There are sufficient washroom

facilities and good facilities are provided for pupils who may become ill during the day.

Provision of information

The school provides parents and prospective parents with clear information relating to the school and the Early Years Foundation Stage through a detailed range of documentation, including prospectuses, parents' handbooks and school website. A weekly newsletter ensures a good flow of information about the school's activities which supplements the daily contacts that parents have with staff. Reports to parents are made appropriately through parents' evenings and an annual report.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The provision for handling complaints is suitable in all respects.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of provision and the outcomes of the Early Years Foundation Stage, including provision for children below three years of age, are outstanding and all aspects of learning and care are underpinned by the Christian ethos of the school. Children of all ages are happy and secure. Activities for those under three years of age provide an excellent foundation for later learning. All children enjoy their lessons and activities. They respond enthusiastically to challenge and develop excellent social and academic skills for the future. They show high levels of curiosity, imagination and concentration, enjoy taking responsibilities and learn to keep themselves healthy and safe. Adults set them excellent examples of thoughtfulness, courtesy and honesty. Relationships and behaviour are consistently outstanding.

The settings provide a stimulating and welcoming environment for children, while staff support the children well. The educational programme provides rich and exciting experience for young children. Planning is meticulous and includes excellent provision for the needs of all children, including those who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs. It includes French, drama, sport and music, all taught by specialists. Children's individual needs are met exceptionally well. As a result, they make excellent progress in both academic and personal development and get off to a flying start when they join the main school.

Resources for teaching and learning are excellent. Play materials for those under three are well chosen. Assessment is of outstanding quality and supports all children's progress very well, including those under three. Careful records of progress are maintained, leading to the compilation of the Early Years Profile. Teachers are well qualified. They demonstrate appropriately high expectations of children and understand how to motivate and support them. The highest priority is given to the safeguarding of children. Policies and procedures to ensure the safety, health and welfare of children are outstanding.

The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage and its overall effectiveness are outstanding and demonstrate the capacity for sustained improvement. The leadership team of the whole provision has high aspirations, undertakes rigorous self-evaluation and has a vision for ongoing improvement, which is shared effectively with the leaders of each setting and within the school. The safeguarding of children is effective. Health and safety procedures are meticulous. Children's wellbeing is significantly enhanced by the excellent organisation of the setting. Partnerships with parents, who are unanimous in their support, and with other bodies are excellent.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets all The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 (the Regulations). The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006.

What the school could do to improve further

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

- complete the process of mapping the relevant use of ICT in schemes of work throughout the school
- ensure that the quality of questioning in all lessons is as high as in the best.

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

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	Christian day primary school		
Date school opened	1986		
Age range of pupils	2–11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 93	Girls: 58	Total: 151
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 52	Girls: 59	Total: 111
Number of children aged 0–3 in registered childcare provision	Boys: 17	Girls: 18	Total: 35
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£8,475		
Annual fees (childcare)	£4725		
Address of school	106 Northcote Road London SW11 6QW		
Telephone number	020 7924 3472		
Email address	receptionist@dolphinschool.org.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Joanna Glen		
Proprietor	Dolphin Trust School		