



# Dolphin School (Incorporating Noahs Ark Nursery Schools)

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Independent School

Inspection report

DfES Registration Number      212/6387  
Unique Reference Number      101084  
Inspection number              296798  
Inspection dates                1-2 February 2007  
Reporting inspector              Mrs Michèle Messaoudi

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Age group 2-11	Published 27 February 2007	Reference no. 296798
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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, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the school

Dolphin School (incorporating Noah's Ark Nursery Schools) is an independent co-educational primary and nursery school with a Christian foundation, catering for children aged two to eleven years. There are 177 pupils on roll, 79 of whom are of compulsory school age. The school was established in 1986 and operates now from four sites. Dolphin Primary School occupies the greater part of the Northcote Road Baptist Church. The three Noah's Ark Nursery Schools are housed in three local churches. 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'*.

## Evaluation of the school

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school, and justifiably so; this is a good school. Its success owes much to the high level of dedication of the staff who strive to ensure that each pupil reaches his or her own potential. It is led by an inspirational principal committed to developing further the already strong ethos of the school and its academic excellence. The rigour of the school's self-evaluation reflects its capacity for improvement.

## Quality of education

The curriculum is good with elements of outstanding provision. Pupils get off to a good start in the nursery and reception classes where a recent Early Years inspection found the quality of education to be good. Across the primary school, the curriculum is broad and very successful in achieving a good balance between high levels of academic success and life-enriching experiences. It includes traditional National Curriculum subjects, with a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy to provide a firm foundation for other subjects. In addition, pupils study Spanish from Reception, theology from Year 3 and Latin in Year 6. Reading activities are planned daily and reading skills are taught well. The school has rightly identified creative writing as a priority for improvement and there are missed opportunities to develop this skill in subjects other than English. The use of specialist teachers results in children achieving highly in

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music, art, drama and physical education. Another strength of the curriculum is the quality of support given to pupils with even mild learning difficulties. Consequently, these pupils achieve as well as their peers. The curriculum is adequately resourced. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has been much improved, and is soon to be enhanced further by a suite of laptops. The curriculum is well planned, although not to the school's full satisfaction in some subjects. The planning of useful cross-curricular links makes pupils' learning a coherent whole. Good provision is made for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE), much of which is taught through the morning relationship time, theology and science. However, the PSHE and citizenship programmes are not planned rigorously at Key Stage 2. The curriculum is greatly enriched by numerous educational visits that contribute to enlivening pupils' learning. Pupils are enthusiastic about taking part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities that develop their sports, artistic and communication skills.

Teaching is good, with some outstanding practice. The quality of the relationships teachers establish with their pupils and the level of confidence they develop in them, are key to promoting positive attitudes to learning and releasing the potential of each pupil. Probing questioning promotes pupils' thinking skills. The best lessons provide consistently high levels of challenge for all pupils. However, in some lessons there is an over-reliance on worksheets, which slows progress. Teaching assistants generally support pupils effectively, though they could be better deployed in some lessons. Teachers know their pupils well and generally match the tasks closely to pupils' needs. They listen to them and provide constructive feedback. Marking is thorough, evaluative and informs further improvement. Pupils are fully involved in the assessment of their work and strive to meet their learning targets for literacy, numeracy and personal development.

Planning is generally good and assessment is used to inform the next steps of learning. However, the school is not making the most effective use of the data it collects to track rigorously the progress of individual pupils as they move up the school, as identified in the school's self-evaluation. Although the school leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning effectively, the programme of professional development does not sufficiently match the needs of the staff and those of pupils.

As a result of the good and well rounded education they receive, all pupils make good progress. By the end of Year 6, they achieve highly in the national tests and enjoy a great deal of success in passing the entrance examination to the school of their choice. Just as importantly, the local secondary headteachers comment positively on their outstanding personal development.

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## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and is a strength of the school. The school places a high priority on the quality of relationships. These are excellent amongst pupils, between pupils and staff and between the school and parents, providing a firm foundation for personal development. Staff are excellent role models who promote the Christian ethos of the school by being warm, sensitive and attentive to each pupil's needs. They are successful in developing each child's self-esteem, confidence, moral character and inner resources. Consequently, pupils are calm, polite, considerate and reflective, and their behaviour is outstanding.

The recently appointed principal has succeeded in raising pupils' spiritual development to an outstanding standard by instituting a weekly whole school assembly that leads pupils to gain a deeper insight into the biblical theme of the week through a fresh approach. In the assembly seen during the inspection, pupils were invited to consider the God-given blessing of free will in contrast with the demonstration that a wide selection of puppets could only move at the will of the puppet master. They were then asked to reflect on their freedom to choose to love everyone.

Pupils' lively responses in class reflect the 'have a go' attitude fostered by teachers. Their willingness to contribute to their community is extended through participation in weekly and occasional performances, electing prefects and raising funds for their link school in Kenya. However, their contributions to the local community are limited.

Pupils appreciate the curricular opportunities they have for cultural development. However, the school has correctly identified that it needs to have a more structured approach to preparing pupils for life in a multicultural, multi-faith society.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. Parents describe the school as 'caring.' The staff are very successful in managing pupils' behaviour positively through the reward system and through modelling excellent manners. Consequently, pupils' behaviour is outstanding in and out of lessons, instances of bullying are extremely rare, and pupils enjoy a high level of emotional well-being. There are effective procedures in place to minimise the risks incurred by all in the course of the school day. Although fire risk assessments have been carried out, there are no records of reports from the fire authorities indicating whether the school has a satisfactory level of fire

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safety. The school has attended to the issue by arranging for visits to the four sites by a fire officer in early February 2007.

Pupils are actively encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles. Older pupils say how they enjoy the range of sports and outdoor activities on offer. They have access to water, fruit juice and fruit at break times.

The school has suitable plans to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

### Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school undertakes the appropriate checks with the Criminal Records Bureau to confirm the staff's suitability to work with children. However, not all the other checks that should be made prior to confirming their appointment are made according to regulations. The school is remedying the situation by updating its recruitment procedure and its personnel files.

### School's premises and accommodation

The four sites provide teaching accommodation that is fit for purpose. On each site, the staff make the best possible use of the space available. The classrooms provide a stimulating learning environment. There is a rolling programme of refurbishment and one site has been renovated. The provision for safe outdoor play ranges from satisfactory to good depending on the site.

### Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The quality of information to parents and prospective parents is good. The school has established a strong partnership with parents through a wide range of regular events. This is reflected in the high number of pre-inspection questionnaires parents returned and in the very positive comments they have made. They feel well informed of their children's progress. At the end of the summer term, they receive good quality annual reports in which teachers comment on the children's progress in every area of learning. Most state what the child cannot do and needs to do to improve as well as what he or she can do.

### Procedures for handling complaints

The school has suitable procedures for handling complaints. Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with suggestions and concerns, so that formal complaints have been very rare.

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## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

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

- ensure that it has a satisfactory level of fire safety, identified by a report from the Fire Authority (paragraph 3(5)).

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

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff, ensure that appropriate checks have been carried out to confirm their medical fitness and professional references (paragraph 4(c)).

## What the school could do to improve further

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

- continue to improve the quality of creative writing
- put in place a rigorous system for tracking each pupil's progress from Nursery to Year 6
- improve further the quality of teaching and learning by closely matching outcomes of monitoring and evaluation to the provision of professional development
- review the curriculum to improve the multicultural aspect of the cultural strand and provide more opportunities for older pupils to contribute to the local community.

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## School details

Name of school	Dolphin School (Incorporating Noahs Ark Nursery Schools)		
DfES number	212/6387		
Unique reference number	101084		
Type of school	Christian day school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 1986		
Age range of pupils	2-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 41	Girls: 38	Total: 79
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 47	Girls: 51	Total: 98
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,969 (Noah's Ark) £6,930 (Dolphin KS1) £7,326 (Dolphin KS2)		
Address of school	Dolphin School (Incorporating Noahs Ark Nursery Schools) 106 Northcote Road London SW11 6QW		
Telephone number	0207924 3472		
Fax number	0208265 8700		
Email address	receptionist@dolphinschool.org.uk		
Principal	Mrs Joanna Glen		
Proprietor	Dolphin School Trust		
Reporting inspector	Mrs Michèle Messaoudi		
Dates of inspection	1–2 February 2007		