

Heathside Preparatory School

Independent School

Inspection report

DfES Registration Number	202/6360
Unique Reference Number	100078
Inspection number	296820
Inspection dates	22-23 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Judith Charlesworth AI

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).

Inspection of funded nursery education was carried out under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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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

Heathside is a co-educational independent preparatory school providing for pupils from three to eleven years old. Children under five attend part or full time in one of the two nursery classes, and full time in the reception class. This provision was inspected by a childcare inspector and is reported at the end of this document. The school is situated in Hampstead, in north-west London. It occupies two buildings, one of which is leased from a church, which it adjoins. Pupils aged seven and under attend this site, although older pupils also use its hall for various activities. The older pupils' school is located in an early 19th century building, a few minutes walk away. The School aims to maintain a friendly and informal atmosphere while fostering a high level of individual responsibility and self-motivation. It seeks to encourage the development of the whole person, so that pupils achieve high academic and personal standards.

Evaluation of the school

Heathside Preparatory School provides good quality education, support, care and guidance for pupils of all ages. The curriculum and the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. As a result, pupils make good academic progress, and their behaviour and personal development are excellent. The school meets most, but not all, of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding. Whilst preparing the pupils very effectively for their next school, Heathside also develops their general knowledge and they achieve high standards in all subjects. The curriculum for nursery and reception age pupils covers all the required areas of learning with an emphasis on learning through play. All subjects of the National Curriculum are included in the curriculum for the older pupils. In addition, all pupils in the school learn French and those in the main school have the opportunity to take part in a wide range of extra-curricular learning such as Mandarin, film and photography, and yoga. The school currently holds the national small schools' chess championship for the second year running.

Parents' comments and inspection questionnaire returns show their very high appreciation of the quality of educational provision and their children's personal and academic development. Heathside places emphasis on the importance of healthy living and includes a wide range of sporting activities in its curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Personal, social and health education is threaded through the curriculum and everyday work, and supports pupils' outstanding personal development very effectively. The curriculum is very well planned. Some subjects such as literacy and numeracy follow the national primary strategies closely, whereas others use selected topics from the guidance to suit the pupils' needs and interests. All subjects are successfully planned to build up pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding systematically to a level above that expected for their age.

Teaching is good throughout the school and all pupils make good progress. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding of pupils' individual needs, and plan work accordingly. Some pupils have targets for achievement set which helps them know what they need to learn or do next to progress. Some pupils have additional needs, such as dyslexia, which are effectively addressed and these pupils reach at least age-appropriate standards. The majority of pupils reach standards above those expected for their age and gain a place at the independent school of their choice when they leave Heathside, often with a scholarship. There are very high expectations of pupils, and teaching informs and challenges them very effectively. Occasionally, the lessons are too teacher directed and pupils do not have enough opportunity to answer or explain themselves fully.

Assessments are regular and are becoming increasingly fine-tuned to identify pupils' levels of attainment and diagnose individuals' difficulties. Marking is good and helps pupils know what to do to improve. The work of pupils in the younger classes is very carefully recorded in portfolios and annotated with teachers' comments. The school has started to record and track assessments of pupils' developing skills more effectively to focus more closely on helping them achieve.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

This aspect of the school's provision is outstanding and parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the help pupils are given. Heathside places a very strong emphasis on pupils' personal development and prepares them very well for making a positive contribution to society. They are given every opportunity to build up their confidence and self-esteem, and become independent, responsible, respectful citizens who will achieve economic well-being. The pupils enjoy school very much. They are relaxed, enthusiastic participants who are keen to be involved in everything that is going. Attendance is good and pupils'

behaviour is outstanding. Pupils have a clear acceptance and understanding of others' beliefs, and show concern and compassion for those living in challenging circumstances. For example, they organise their own fund-raising activities and choose what they want to buy with the money raised. A 'bits and bobs' sale was being organised by Year 6 during the inspection.

Pupils' spiritual development is promoted very effectively through their cultural development, which includes appreciation of literature, art, poetry, drama and music. The school has put on a number of large theatrical performances, including *Grease* and *Les Miserables* in recent years. Very well conducted assemblies celebrate the rich cultural and religious diversity of the pupil population and support their spiritual development very effectively. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong and express their views willingly on ethical issues, such as the dangers of pollution. Heathside supports the development of a considerate lifestyle by incorporating issues such as energy saving and recycling into its everyday work. Moral and social development starts with the youngest pupils. For example, the Reception class made a 'book of love' to illustrate various ways they can show their friendship to one another, and certificates are awarded to pupils throughout the school for personal qualities, such as being kind.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school provides well for pupils' welfare, health and safety, which are good. There are suitable policies to promote good behaviour and prevent bullying. The sanctions outlined are clear and appropriately recorded. Pupils report that they are safe and happy, and that there is no bullying at Heathside. Fire safety is appropriately addressed. Careful risk assessments are made of external activities, such as visits and the extensive use of Hampstead Heath. Health and safety and arrangements for First Aid are satisfactorily addressed. The staff's child protection training is currently out-of-date but will be up-dated later in the school year. Other policies relating to safeguarding children also need to be updated in line with recommended guidance. Although the school has an appropriate statement regarding access for the disabled, this is not supported by an access plan as required by legislation. The admission register has been recently computerised and attendance registers are generally well kept, although there are occasional lapses, for example when pencil is used for a day or two.

The school works very well to keep pupils safe and healthy. Only healthy foods are allowed, and pupils have free access to water. Sport and physical activities are strongly promoted, and pupils are encouraged to walk as much as possible, for example to and from their swimming lessons in Swiss Cottage. Yoga is offered as an optional activity which supports pupils' mental health and well-being. Relationships with staff are good and the close, family atmosphere

means that staff know when pupils are troubled, and pupils say they know who to turn to if in difficulties.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All staff have had an enhanced check with the Criminal Records Bureau to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. Procedures have recently been put into place to ensure that the full range of checks required is completed on new applicants, and staff information is currently being compiled into a single central record to meet current guidance.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are of a satisfactory standard. They are well maintained and in good decorative order. Both buildings are limited in space, however, and include numerous stairs which make access very difficult for the disabled. The school has a written statement about its regard for equal opportunities, but has not prepared an accessibility plan. Nevertheless, the school makes very good use of the space available and is purchasing a property adjoining the lower school building. This will provide a range of specialist subject facilities and is due to open in September 2007. It will also release more space in the lower school building. The lower school has a small playground. Playtimes are staggered so that only one class is outside at a time, and there is a good range of play equipment for pupils to use. The upper school building has no outside play facilities, however pupils from both sites are regularly taken to Hampstead Heath for play and curricular sport. There are two regulatory requirements that the school does not currently meet. The lower school does not have a room designated as a medical room, and the sick room in the upper school is not fully equipped. Boys and girls in Year 3 currently share toilet facilities and there are insufficient toilets in the upper school overall.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information for parents and carers is good. The school has recently developed an attractive, informative website which has full details about the school and its provision, with direct links to all the required policies. It also includes a school events diary and a facility for classes to upload their own news and photographs, and for parents to make comments. New and prospective parents are given a New Parents Pack which contains a brief prospectus and relevant policies, permission forms and up-to-date information. The prospectus and New Parents' Pack are currently being re-formulated to match the information on the website.

Parents are kept informed about school events by regular, attractive newsletters, and notices, photographs and displays at the front door of each building. They receive good quality annual reports, and brief interim reports on their children's progress.

Procedures for handling complaints

A few parents indicated that they were unclear about the school's complaints procedure. However, the procedure has recently been revised and can now be accessed directly from the school's website. A copy of the complaints procedure is sent to new parents, and it can be requested from the school at any time.

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 child protection training is kept fully up-to-date and that policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils are in compliance with the latest DfES guidance: *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education 2007* (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide sufficient washrooms for pupils, including facilities for pupils with special needs, which take account of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(k)).
- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(l)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

What the school could do to improve further

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

- develop the system for tracking pupils' developing skills, knowledge and understanding so that targets can be set for all pupils to help them understand what to do to achieve even more.

Inspection of funded nursery education

Effectiveness of the funded nursery education

Children are very happy within the school and excellent pastoral care helps them develop self-esteem and confidence. Behaviour is very good with an emphasis on looking after others; with children's efforts recognised and rewarded. Children listen well, they are learning to work together and co-operate. Children's spiritual, moral and social development is fostered.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Evaluating activities ensures they meet children's needs and children progress steadily. They are confident communicators, listen well, enjoy stories and contribute to show and tell. To help them learn about numbers, they use construction sets, create patterns, and measure ingredients when cooking. Children express themselves imaginatively through drawing, role play, music and movement. Experiences are enhanced when visiting the butterfly house or the local dentist. Children thoroughly enjoy physical play. Outside they climb, throw and catch with increasing skill and use wheeled toys. Regular trips to the heath enable them to play football and use the large play equipment. Generally children develop their self-help skills when choosing activities or resources; however, during some sessions opportunities are limited.

Partnership with parents is outstanding. They praise highly the care and inspirational teaching given by staff. They are warmly welcomed and encouraged to ask questions about children's progress. Regular parent's evenings are held and detailed reports written for each child. Newsletters and photographic displays inform about the curriculum. The open door policy encourages parents to share experiences and skills with the children.

The leadership and management are good. Both head teachers have a clear overview of the provision, aided by the nursery teacher, an Early Years specialist. Staff practise is monitored through observation and verbal feedback. Systems to complete more formal assessments are being introduced. The motivated staff team are committed to providing a good service, attending

courses run by Camden and regular inset days. The setting meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Recommendations or actions to improve the funded nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education the registered person should take account of the following recommendations:

- develop more opportunities for children to practise their self-help skills.

School details

Name of school	Heathside Preparatory School		
DfES number	202/6360		
Unique reference number	100078		
Unique reference number (funded nursery education)	EY240948		
Type of school	Preparatory Day School with Nursery		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1993		
Age range of pupils	3-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 58	Girls: 51	Total: 109
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 9	Girls: 15	Total: 24
Number of children receiving funded nursery education	Boys: 24	Girls: 11	Total: 35
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,650 - £7,650		
Address of school	16 New End Hampstead London NW3 1JA		
Telephone number	020 7794 5857		
Email address	info@heathside.net		
Headteachers	Mrs J White & Ms M Remus		
Proprietor	Mrs J White & Ms M Remus		
Reporting inspector	Judith Charlesworth AI		
Childcare inspector	Deborah Wilkinson		
Dates of inspection	22-23 March 2007		