

Yorston Lodge School

Independent School

Inspection report

DfES Registration Number	875/6013
Unique Reference Number	111479
Inspection number	301647
Inspection dates	1-2 May 2007
Reporting inspector	John Coleman HMI

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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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

Yorston Lodge School (YLS) was established in 1904 and is situated in the centre of Knutsford. The school is a non-selective independent day school for girls and boys aged 3-11 years. A before and after school club provides care for pupils of all ages including the majority of school closure periods. This is registered and was inspected by the OFSTED Children's Directorate in March 2006. There are no pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school changed ownership in September 2006 and now belongs to a small group of schools under the collective management of Montague Place Ltd.

The vast majority of pupils transfer to either selective independent secondary schools or to local grammar schools. Yorston Lodge prides itself on the long history of successful placements of this type. Class sizes are small with an average ratio of one adult to nine pupils. The ethos of the school is stated as, *'At Yorston Lodge School, the staff pride themselves in offering a holistic education – high levels of academic success as well as extra-curricular breadth, within a happy, secure and caring learning environment, where pupils are actively encouraged to become involved in the arts, sport and local community projects. Many generations of the same family have passed through the school and regardless of age, everyone knows everyone else. YLS is just like a large family and new children settle in quickly. The older children take great pride in helping their younger counterparts.'* The school's last inspection took place in 2000.

Evaluation of the school

Yorston Lodge School provides a good quality of education for its pupils. Parents and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Provision for pupils' personal, social, spiritual and cultural development is outstanding and behaviour by pupils is exemplary. The quality of care is outstanding. A strong family ethos characterises the school. The school meets almost all of the regulations.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good enabling all pupils to achieve well. The National Curriculum provides the main structure of the school's provision and this is extended to include

French, Latin, speech, drama and communication. The Junior school curriculum also contains lessons in verbal and non-verbal reasoning. There is an overview of the curriculum and some schemes of work that provide useful outlines of what is to be taught. These do not always detail the objectives for pupils' learning or clearly show the skills and knowledge which will build as pupils progress. The school has a strong performing arts department. Around three quarters of pupils in the junior school learn to play a musical instrument. They take music examinations, achieve high success rates and participate in regular concerts. During the inspection three girls performed 'Pie Jesu' in two part harmony for the whole of the assembled school. This was in advance of a concert the following week. Accompanied by the music teacher they entranced the pupils and adults with their wonderful and moving rendition. The curriculum is supported by a very good range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils say how much they enjoy these opportunities; gymnastics is a firm favourite. Sporting activities are greatly enjoyed by pupils and the school makes good use of the local facilities at Egerton Youth Club and its sports grounds. Other opportunities include visits to places of interest, such as the skiing trip to the French Alps. Year 6 has a residential opportunity in the Peak District and Year 5 enjoy a 3-day stay in Beeston.

The quality of teaching is good overall and some outstanding lessons were seen by inspectors. Teaching is characterised by traditional, formal methods. Teachers know their pupils well because of very good relationships and they respond effectively to their individual needs. Questions are chosen well and these are frequently used by teachers to challenge pupils' understanding and knowledge. Pupils are encouraged to provide detailed reasons for their answers and conclusions. These high expectations are instrumental in ensuring the good progress which pupils make. In a Year 4 mathematics lesson pupils enjoyed cutting up triangles and realigning them to form a straight line angle, thus proving there are 180 degrees in a triangle. In the resulting question and answer session led by the teacher the pupils demonstrated a very secure knowledge of the properties of triangles due to the teacher's skilful choice of questions.

Teachers' planning outlines the content to be covered but does not always pinpoint the learning objectives of the lesson. Consequently some lessons fail to build effectively on what pupils already know and can do and instead consolidate existing knowledge. Pupils are rigorously and thoroughly prepared for entrance examinations to selective secondary schools or to grammar schools. This is underpinned by an emphasis on pupils practising reasoning tests at which they become very proficient. Pupils have achieved a 100% pass rate in entrance exams in recent years and almost all are accepted into their first choice secondary school.

Pupils in the Kindergarten have good personal and social skills. They behave well and show good interest in learning. The school's assessments show that pupils make good progress throughout Kindergarten that is sustained in the Reception class. By the end of the Foundation Stage most pupils are above average in the skills of communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and in personal

and social development. This is aided by the focus which the school gives to developing speaking and listening skills across the curriculum. Good progress overall characterises pupils' experiences as they move through the main school, though this is not entirely uniform and varies amongst classes and subjects. The school records pupils' attainment each year using a range of standardised tests in English and mathematics together with the scores from reasoning examinations and reading tests. These provide clear evidence of the high standards achieved by many pupils. The school does not have a structured system for analysing these results, pupils' progress is not evaluated in a systematic way, and this restricts the opportunities for teachers to ensure that they always build on pupils' prior attainment.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school is highly successful in promoting confidence and raising the self-esteem of all pupils. Relationships are outstanding and pupils are polite, caring, articulate and highly motivated. Behaviour in and around the school is exemplary. Pupils apply themselves very well to their learning because they respect and value the efforts of their teachers. As one pupil told inspectors, 'Teachers help a lot and we have fun at the same time.' Regular assemblies reinforce the caring, family ethos of the school. Opportunities are taken to celebrate pupils' work and achievements. Pupils pray with reverence. The headteacher is an excellent role model for pupils who learn to be considerate, caring and co-operative young people. All staff in the school follow this lead. Pupils know what is right and wrong due to the school promoting its rewards systems very effectively. Pupils receive visitors with courtesy and good manners; they hold doors open and greet people warmly with 'good morning' or 'good afternoon.' There are good links with a school in South Africa, enabling pupils to write to pen-pals and thus learn about another culture and way of life. Pupils are involved in their local community in a variety of ways, such as participating in the May Festival; they also learn about the culture and customs of their home town. Pupils have an appreciation of other faiths through the provision for Religious Education, though they do not have opportunities to visit different places of worship other than the local church.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is good. Pupils respond well to the care shown for their well-being and safety. Pupils say they really enjoy school and are looked after well and that there is no bullying. Pupils' outstanding behaviour reflects the school's successful implementation of its behaviour and anti-bullying policies. Yorston Lodge School successfully meets its aim to provide a strong family ethos for all its pupils.

Risk assessments are carried out effectively to ensure that the experiences pupils receive and the building where they work are safe. For example, regular risk assessments are carried out for prevention of fire and to ensure that fire-fighting

appliances are fully operational. Written policies are in place for health and safety and for child protection. All staff have received training for first aid and the headmistress is named as the designated member of staff for child protection.

The school meets all requirements for the safeguarding of pupils. The admissions and attendance registers comply with regulations. The school's plan, indicating how it will fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002, is partially in place. It has yet to evaluate the need to improve physical access to the building. The school has also identified improvements it will make to improve access to the curriculum.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Most of the required checks are in place but some need updating to bring records in line with current requirements.

School's premises and accommodation

The school comprises a main building on three floors plus a basement. There is an additional house within the enclosed grounds that provides the Kindergarten and one of the classrooms. Outside there are compact play areas, including a hard surfaced yard and a soft surfaced playground.

Good use has been made of the limited amount of outdoor space. A well-planned timetable for breaks and lunch ensures that pupils can play and socialise safely with each other. The development of a soft-surfaced adventure playground gives an added dimension which is much enjoyed by the pupils. Although there is no separate outdoor facility for the youngest pupils they have sole use of the yard and play area for a good part of each day.

The classrooms are of adequate size and have satisfactory resources. The information technology suite is used by each class in turn. A designated music room allows appropriate tuition to be offered. The hall is small but it is possible to assemble the whole school and it provides adequately for physical education. The basement is used well to provide cloakrooms for the junior pupils; this keeps the classrooms free of bags and coats. Corridors and stairways are wide and have suitable safety barriers. It has been brought to the attention of the school that on the top floor there is a potential hazard caused by a door which opens across a stairway. Windows have appropriate safety bars. Ventilation and lighting are satisfactory.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The quality of information to parents is good. The school meets all statutory requirements by means of two parent booklets and additional letters to parents.

Parents are very supportive of the school. They receive twice annual reports about the progress and attainment of their children. The school website is well presented and is kept up to date.

Procedures for handling complaints

The schools' complaints policy satisfies requirements and parents are made aware of this through the parent booklets.

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 suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff ensure that they have been subject to a check with the Criminal Records Bureau (paragraph 4(b))
- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff ensure that appropriate checks have been made to confirm their qualifications and medical fitness (paragraph 4(c)).

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 points for development:

- improve the analysis of pupils' progress
- ensure that teachers consistently plan specific objectives for pupils' learning that build on their prior attainment.

School details

Name of school	Yorston Lodge School		
DfES number	875/6013		
Unique reference number	111479		
Type of school	Co-educational Day School		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1904		
Age range of pupils	3-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 71	Girls: 73	Total: 144
Number of children receiving day care	Boys: 16	Girls: 16	Total: 32
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4275		
Address of school	18 St John's Road Knutsford Cheshire WA16 0DP		
Telephone number	01565 633177		
Fax number	01566 632484		
Email address	headmistress@yorstonlodeschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Janet Dallimore		
Proprietor	Montague Place Ltd		
Reporting inspector	John Coleman HMI		
Dates of inspection	1-2 May 2007		