

Heath House Preparatory School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	209/6294
Unique Reference Number	100203
Inspection number	320357
Inspection dates	27-28 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Stephen Dennett 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).

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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 Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Heath House is a small preparatory school located in two buildings in Blackheath Village, London. It was established in 1993 by the present proprietors. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, although the school has a strong international flavour with pupils from 37 different nationalities. The school caters for boys and girls aged four to 11 and there are currently 87 pupils on roll. The school has a few pupils with additional learning needs, mainly moderate learning difficulties. The proprietors own a chalet in Villars, Switzerland, which is used for residential visits. This is the first published inspection report for the school.

The school has a wide range of objectives, based on ensuring that pupils receive a good 'all round' education. The school also stresses the individuality of the child and the need to ensure that education is well matched to each child's needs. The school seeks to create a caring family environment, where each child is appreciated, loved and understood. The school motto is *'Give me a place to stand and I will move the earth'* (Archimedes).

Evaluation of the school

The quality of education provided at Heath House School is good. There is an interesting and varied curriculum and good teaching, which engage pupils' interests effectively. As a result, pupils are making good progress. Pupils' personal development and behaviour are good. Parents and pupils are positive about the school, which has a good ethos and provides a good quality of care. It meets most of the regulations apart from aspects of provision for the youngest children in the Foundation Stage.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. A wide range of activities is provided for pupils who appreciate the opportunities they are offered. *"This is a great school to be at"*, said one pupil in Year 5. An outstanding feature of the school is the wide range of educational visits and extra-curricular activities provided. These add immensely to pupils' enjoyment of their education. There is a well-written curriculum policy and schemes of work for all subjects cover the syllabus appropriately. The curriculum is generally well matched to the needs of all pupils, including those with additional

learning needs and those who speak English as an additional language. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall and is generally appropriate to their needs, although this is not the case with the provision for their physical development as there are insufficient opportunities provided for children to engage in outdoor physical activities as a routine part of their learning.

Personal, social and health education is good and is rooted in the ethos of the school. A good range of sporting activities are available to pupils, and they say that they especially enjoy all the different sports available.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Relationships between staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves are warm, caring and respectful. Pupils are confident in speaking to staff and will share their problems and ask for help with their work assured that they will have a positive response. One Year 4 pupil commented, *"I feel teachers always have time for you when you have a problem."* Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good overall. Teachers have high expectations and pupils are consistently challenged to work to their full capacity. Most lessons move at a brisk pace but occasionally in Key Stage 1 time is lost because pupils become restless due to inactivity.

Planning for lessons is variable, but generally good. Occasionally, plans are too brief to provide teachers with a clear direction to the lesson. Not all planning is evaluated effectively to identify the next steps pupils need to take in their learning. The best planning clearly identified what pupils are to learn in the medium and longer term as they move through the school and how pupils' achievement is to be assessed. There is good support for pupils with additional learning needs as well as for those who do not speak English as their first language. Teachers are well qualified and have good subject knowledge. Teachers make good use of questioning to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject being taught. The school is generally well equipped and resources are used effectively. However, there is insufficient large play equipment for children in the Foundation Stage. Teachers have effective systems for managing pupils' behaviour, which encourage them to behave responsibly.

There are good systems for assessing pupils' progress and attainment, including detailed baseline assessment when children come into Reception. Assessment information is used effectively to inform teachers' planning and to match work to pupils' needs. Standardised tests are also used to assess pupils' performance in reading and spelling and their cognitive ability. The school has good systems for measuring its performance against the requirements of the 11 plus examination.

Pupils of all abilities make good progress. Children in the Foundation Stage are making good progress towards the early learning goals for children aged five except in their physical development, where progress is satisfactory. Pupils make good progress in the acquisition of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Pupils' progress in the development of their handwriting is

very variable and standards towards the end of the school are not as high as they should be.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are enthusiastic about their school and all say they really enjoy being there. The weekly acts of collective worship reinforce the ethos of the school and provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is good. Opportunities are taken to celebrate pupils' individual efforts by the handing out of awards and house points. Pupils are consistently encouraged to take responsibility for their own work, and there are incentive schemes such as 'plus points' to support this. Pupils make a positive contribution to the community by raising considerable sums for charity and the school has good links with the local church. Pupils have a range of duties around the school, such as being prefects, which encourage their sense of responsibility.

Pupils' behaviour is good and attendance is satisfactory. Attendance is monitored well and regular or unusual patterns of absence are investigated fully. There are very few incidents of poor behaviour, but when they do arise, they are dealt with fairly and firmly. Consequently, pupils feel safe and enjoy working in a happy, well-organised and friendly environment. Pupils' cultural development is good. As a result of studies in a number of subjects, pupils are developing an appropriate appreciation of their own and other cultures. The school makes good use of pupils' ethnic origins to develop an atmosphere of tolerance and good racial harmony. Pupils have a good understanding of public services and institutions in England through their work in history and international studies. Pupils are very positive about their future and feel they are well prepared for the next phase of their education. They have all the skills necessary to ensure their future economic well-being.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school makes good provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils. Pupils are aware of the importance of staying safe and healthy and school snacks and lunches are carefully planned to provide healthy options with fruit and salad. Health and safety matters are given a high priority and risk assessments are carried out effectively in school and for visits. Staff are trained in first aid, first aid boxes are located where needed, and accidents are recorded diligently. Policies are clear and reflected in the school's good procedures. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are good and include external training for senior staff. Pupils are supervised very well at all times. The school has a policy, which meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Procedures for checking the suitability of staff to work with children meet all current requirements. The school has a good staff appointments system which ensures appropriate checks are undertaken before staff are appointed.

School's premises and accommodation

The school's premises and accommodation are satisfactory overall and are used effectively to ensure pupils receive a good education. The school is located in two premises. One is a converted building in a residential street (Heath House) and the other in the old Blackheath primary school (Tranquil Hall). Both buildings have been suitably adapted to provide adequate accommodation, but space is restricted on both sites. There is no provision for outdoor play space at Heath House for children in the Foundation Stage hindering opportunities for their physical development. At Tranquil Hall there is a small courtyard, which is used as a garden area for Key Stage 2. Good use is made of the neighbouring heath for sports and outdoor activities. There is a good ICT suite, which is used effectively to raise standards in the subject. Both buildings are attractively decorated and well maintained.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides a good range of information for parents, carers and others. There is an informative prospectus, which is supplemented by a full range of helpful additional information. Regular letters to parents throughout the year are also helpful and keep parents up to date on events in school. Parents receive an informative annual report in the summer, a useful summary interim report at Christmas and have opportunities to attend consultation meetings. Parents were very positive in their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire. One parent wrote, *'Our son is exceptionally happy. He is not only developing well academically, but in confidence and maturity'*.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a set of procedures, which meet the regulations.

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 the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- provide more opportunities for free play and physical activities for children at the Foundation Stage to improve their physical development (paragraph 1(2)(h)(ii))
- provide more large apparatus for the physical development of children at the Foundation Stage (paragraph 1(3)(f)).

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

- improve arrangements for access to an outdoor space for children at the Foundation Stage (paragraph 5(t)).

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 quality and consistency of teachers' planning so that it clearly identifies what pupils are to learn and how future planning will be adjusted in the light of assessment
- raise standards in handwriting at Key Stage 2.

School details

Name of school	Heath House Preparatory School
DCSF number	209/6294
Unique reference number	100203
Type of school	Preparatory
Status	Independent
Date school opened	September 1993
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 53 Girls: 34 Total: 87
Annual fees (day pupils)	£8,700 - £9,300
Address of school	37 Wemyss Road Blackheath London SE3 0TG
Telephone number	02082 971900
Fax number	02082 971550
Email address	info@heathhouseprepschool.com
Headteachers	Mr Ian Laslett and Mrs Sophia Laslett
Proprietors	Mr Ian Laslett and Mrs Sophia Laslett
Reporting inspector	Stephen Dennett AI
Dates of inspection	27-28 November 2007