

Farrowdale House School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	353/6014
Unique Reference Number	105747
Inspection number	330046
Inspection dates	11 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Peter Toft 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 Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Farrowdale House School was founded in 1983 as a co-educational independent school for boys and girls between the ages of three and eleven years. It currently has 85 pupils on roll. Eighteen children are funded under the nursery grant scheme. Two pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive additional support. The school's premises in Shaw, Oldham were originally built in 1895 by local industrialists for educational purposes. They were subsequently used as a school by the local authority, from whom they were bought by the present proprietor. The headmaster is responsible to the proprietor.

The school prepares pupils for entrance examinations to independent grammar schools. It sets high expectations and aims for academic rigour, traditional values and a happy, secure learning environment. The last inspection was in April, 2005.

Evaluation of the school

Farrowdale House School is a well run school which provides a good quality of education. Standards are well above average and the success rate in grammar school entrance examinations is high. Teaching is consistently rigorous and the pupils are well behaved and motivated to learn. They make good, steady progress throughout the school and in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The school provides a caring and pleasant atmosphere for learning. The broad curriculum and wide range of extra-curricular activities give pupils plenty of opportunities to engage in interesting activities and develop personally. The school has improved steadily since the last inspection.

Quality of education

As in the previous inspection, the school teaches a good, broad curriculum which covers the National Curriculum and provision for pupils' personal development. In addition a modern foreign language is now taught to all pupils in Years 3 to 6. Strong emphasis is placed on the core subjects of English and mathematics. These are taught rigorously to high standards. This is helped by the good use of modern

teaching materials and a wide range of learning activities which stimulate and engage the pupils. Pupils gain solid grounding in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy which helps prepare them securely for their future studies. Good provision for information and communication technology (ICT) also prepares pupils well for independent enquiry using the internet. Science and physical education are well provided for and both contribute significantly to pupils' good understanding of healthy eating and living. Personal, social and health education is planned carefully and given appropriate coverage in the curriculum. This supports the good personal development of the pupils throughout the school. The curriculum is modified on an individual basis for the small number of pupils who have learning difficulties. This is effective and enables them to make good progress. The school has a clear written curriculum policy and effective schemes of work for each subject. Curriculum planning and development are covered thoroughly in the school's general planning procedures. The range of extra-curricular activities is good for a school of this size. Pupils have ample opportunities to engage in physical exercise and to play competitive games in school and with other schools.

As in the previous inspection, teaching is usually good and never less than sound throughout the school. Teachers have good and up to date subject expertise and the enthusiasm and skill to convey this in interesting ways to their classes. In some lessons the work set does not sufficiently challenge the more able pupils. Pupils say that they enjoy their learning and they show high levels of interest, curiosity and perseverance in lessons. They concentrate well when working independently or as a class and they cooperate readily especially in pairs discussing problems they are attempting to solve. Behaviour in class and around the school is excellent and this is aided by the interesting and varied activities set in lessons and the teachers' effective classroom management. Lesson planning is effective and teachers make productive use of modern teaching materials to enliven lessons. The quality of teaching is evaluated by the headteacher and his judgements are in line with those of the inspectors. His current priorities to develop teaching methods are sound, including helping staff to keep abreast of national developments in teaching methods and to develop ways of challenging the more able pupils to attain more highly. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and carefully. They give helpful comments on how to improve. The pupils spoken to have a very clear idea of how well they are doing and are confident that they will receive strong support from staff when they experience difficulties in learning. Assessment records are thorough and staff are well able to track the progress of individual pupils from year to year. Staff make good use of their knowledge of pupils' progress as they plan lessons, although in the EYFS this sharing their knowledge with each other is not always fully effective.

Standards are consistently well above average as shown in the pupils' work, the teachers' assessment records, and the external test and examination results in Year 6. Pupils are given a thorough grounding in English and mathematics as a result of rigorous coverage. This stands pupils in good stead for entrance examinations to selective secondary schools, for which the success rate is consistently high. They also achieve well in science, ICT, other subjects of the National Curriculum and the recently introduced Spanish course for Years 3 to 6. Pupils, including the very small

number with learning difficulties, make good progress throughout the school and the EYFS because of the consistently effective teaching.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good, as it was in the previous inspection, throughout the school and the EYFS. Pupils grow to become confident and considerate individuals, capable of taking initiatives and exercising responsibility. They are given good opportunities and encouragement throughout the school, with older pupils having appropriate responsibility to help younger pupils, for example to settle disputes in the playground. The school sets high expectations for pupils' behaviour which as a result is good. Parents express strong satisfaction with the ways in which pupils' good behaviour and high levels of motivation are secured. There is no evidence of bullying in the school. The pupils attend regularly and appreciate very much the calm, friendly and purposeful atmosphere which provides a good basis for them to concentrate and learn. Their social and moral development is good and both lessons and activities give them ample opportunity to develop their communication skills and capacity to cooperate with others and to consider moral issues. The curriculum provides a strong basis for pupils to understand the viewpoints, for example in religion, of people from different cultures. The programme of assemblies contributes strongly to this, as does the clear capacity pupils develop to listen to and see the points of view of other pupils. Residential trips in this country and abroad for older pupils add significantly to this awareness. Pupils engage readily and generously in fund raising for charities. Although religious education is not taught as a subject the curriculum gives good opportunities for pupils to reflect on their lives and the lives of others, and assemblies give wide coverage of the main religious faiths. The pupils were observed showing impressive levels of respect and consideration during the televised Remembrance Service and two minutes' silence during the inspection. The educational provision overall contributes to pupils' good understanding of public services and institutions. This, together with their good development of basic skills, prepares them well for future economic well-being. During breaks and lunch times the school is a calm and civilised place and pupils respond eagerly to the opportunities they have to play and talk with each other and the staff.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

This is a caring school where good steps are taken to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety, as in the last inspection. All the required policies are in place and are implemented effectively. Pupils feel valued and respected. Procedures for recruiting staff and safeguarding children comply with requirements and a single central record is in place which shows that all the necessary checks have been carried out. The school has forged good links with outside support agencies. This, together with the school's own internal support mechanisms, ensures that help is always on hand for any vulnerable child. Very good procedures for child protection are firmly in place and are assiduously followed by staff. Within lessons and at break times, levels of supervision are good. Pupils feel very safe and secure in school. They are adamant that bullying is not a problem and that there is always someone to talk to if they

have any worries or concerns. Pupils have a good understanding of what is needed to keep fit and healthy, for example through diet and exercise, and a mature awareness of how to manage risks in their lives. The school has appropriate awareness of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and fulfils its obligations in full.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision for the EYFS is good and helps to ensure that children get off to a successful start in their education. They achieve well and make good progress. The teaching provides a range of interesting activities which capture the imagination of the children. There are particular strengths in how well early reading, writing and number skills are taught. Another strength lies in how all adults work together successfully in helping children to develop into confident, independent learners who are expected to 'do things for themselves.' This is becoming more evident in the increasing balance between adult-led and child-led activities. Good use is made of the outdoor accommodation to provide a range of physical activities in which children participate readily. Visits into the local community and visits from adults from differing occupations extend children's experiences. Children are often very well behaved and thoroughly enjoy their learning. They readily respond to the high expectations adults set for them to be polite, courteous and mindful of the needs of others. Focused observations of individual children are increasingly carried out and the EYFS leader has accurately identified the need for this information to be shared more systematically between teachers and assistants, and used to best effect in matching tasks to the individual needs of children. The quality of care, relationships with parents and commitment to keeping children healthy and safe are all clear indicators of the strong emphasis given to the welfare of each child. EYFS provision is led and managed well. There is an accurate awareness of strengths and an ongoing commitment to making provision better.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

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:

- strengthen procedures to evaluate teaching in the main school to help staff challenge more able pupils to achieve more highly
- in the EYFS, improve assessment and the sharing of information about pupils' achievement between adults to give sharper focus to the planning of lessons.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

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

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?		√		
How well do children achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage relative to their starting points and capabilities?		√		
How good are the personal development and well-being of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?		√		
What is the quality of welfare, health and safety of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?		√		
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?		√		
What is the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage including, where relevant, the quality of childcare?		√		

School details

Name of school	Farrowdale House School		
DCSF number	353/6014		
Unique reference number	105747		
Type of school	Preparatory school with nursery		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1983		
Age range of pupils	3-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 42	Girls: 42	Total: 84
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,440		
Address of school	Farrow Street Shaw Oldham Lancashire OL2 7AD		
Telephone number	01706 844533		
Fax number	01706 291544		
Email address	farrowdale@aol.com		
Headteacher	Mr F Wilkinson		
Proprietor	Mrs C J Ashworth		
Reporting inspector	Peter Toft HMI		
Dates of inspection	11 November 2008		