

Wimbledon Common Preparatory School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	315/6062
Unique Reference Number	102690
Inspection number	333817
Inspection dates	18 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Linda Kelsey 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

Wimbledon Common Prep School (known as 'Squirrels') was founded in 1919 as a preparatory school for King's College School (KCS) and other public schools. The school was owned privately until July 2006 when it was bought by the Corporation of Kings' College School. 'Squirrels' is a pre-preparatory school for 151 boys aged 4-8 years, who are mostly of white British origin, but there are also some from other minority ethnic groups. There are no boys identified as having special educational needs. Its ethos is based on non-denominational Christian principles although it welcomes pupils from other faiths. The school is non-selective and provides a traditional education that aims to instil a love of learning in a friendly, welcoming and attractive environment, in keeping with the school's motto "Industry with Cheerfulness". There are eight classes with up to 20 boys in a class. Pupils move onto other local school as well as KCS when they are seven or eight years old.

The school is situated in a beautiful building with a large playground area surrounded by trees near Wimbledon village and the common. Many of the full-time members of staff have been at the school for many years, and many of the past pupils and parents have kept a long-term contact with the school and its staff. It currently has eight full-time qualified teachers, including the headteacher, two part-time teachers and seven other support staff.

The school was first inspected in November 2006 when it was judged to be meeting the requirements for registration. Its strengths were noted as good progress in English and mathematics, promoting good behaviour and attitudes to learning and creating a happy and friendly atmosphere for boys to thrive. Some issues were also raised and these were to:

- ensure that the designated child protection officer and all staff receive appropriate training to comply with current guidance
- implement the policy relating to external visits and activities
- ensure that all classrooms are appropriate in size to allow effective teaching
- ensure there are sufficient washrooms for pupils
- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill

- ensure that parents and prospective parents are made aware of the school's complaints procedure
- give stronger emphasis to the use of ICT
- enhance access to equipment and resources, such as sand and water, for investigations and structured play.

Evaluation of the school

The school satisfactorily meets its aims as set out to parents. Many pupils get their first choice places at future preparatory schools. Pupils are mostly successful in gaining high level skills in English and mathematics. Standards and progress are good in music and pupils' behaviour is excellent; their attitude to learning and the relationships they have with staff are also good. The school cares for its pupils well and policies are in place to safeguard their welfare at all times. It has successfully addressed some of the issues raised at the last inspection, such as establishing a designated child protection officer and implementing policies relating to external visits. There are now sufficient washrooms for pupils and staff. However, as reported at the time of the last inspection, although there is a complaints procedure in place, parents are not always aware of where they can access this as it is not mentioned in the school prospectus or on the informative website. The school has not yet provided appropriate facilities for children who are ill in accordance with the regulations. Information and communication technology (ICT) and other technology subjects are still not taught in the school. The provision for Early Years Foundation Stage is inadequate and does not meet current statutory requirements. The school recognises some of these weaknesses and has plans in place to extend the building and improve provision.

Quality of education

The quality of education is satisfactory overall because of the progress pupils make in English and mathematics. However, the curriculum is inadequate across the school because it is narrow and too focused on core skills to the detriment of a wider and more challenging curriculum to which the pupils are entitled. A wide range of sports fixtures, sports activities, music and art are available as extra curricular options. Class work is not planned or sufficiently different for each level of ability in the classes and for most of the time all pupils are engaged in the same learning activity, whatever their prior knowledge and understanding. For some pupils these activities are too easy and mundane while for others they are more difficult. Teachers rely on pupils asking for help rather than monitoring their progress in class. As a result, those who are more confident get more attention than others and this leads to an inequality in provision across the school overall. A significant minority of pupils spend time in lessons without making much progress in their learning and it is not common practice for teachers to check how they are getting on, their time being devoted to hearing pupils read.

Curriculum policies and schemes of work are not supported or implemented effectively and consistently across the school, or adequately monitored by senior

staff. For example, no schemes have been developed to support the teaching of ICT or design and technology. The requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum are not met. Issues similar to these were raised at the time of the last inspection.

Pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning. Progress in the core skills are satisfactory overall because pupils are articulate and their standards are above average in their reading, writing and number work. In one lesson pupils sang beautifully as they prepared for a concert. However, the lack of challenge in many aspects of the work taught, and the very prescriptive teaching which is common across the school, inhibits pupils from gaining independence in their learning. As a result too few pupils make the progress they are capable of in technology, creative work, research techniques, enquiry skills or problem-solving. Most lessons are dependent on pre-prepared worksheets which require pupils to spend time filling in answers and give them little opportunity to think or reason things out for themselves. Typical of this is the time given to colouring in mundane worksheets in mathematics and the painting of the same, identical picture of a Roman galleon in art. The lack of teaching of ICT skills means that pupils are not well prepared for technological experiences as they get older. With no library in the school and without regular access to one outside as part of the school's provision, pupils are not learning how to access information and use this for themselves.

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory overall because pupils make progress in English and mathematics. Teaching is too varied across the school and parents are right to be concerned as it leads to inequalities of opportunity and access to the curriculum for all pupils. Both good and inadequate teaching were observed in the majority of year groups. Teachers manage behaviour well and all pupils behave impeccably throughout the day and this results in variance in quality overall. The children are a credit to their parents and the school. Teachers generally have good relationships with the pupils and care for them well. Skills in basic reading, writing and number work are high and there is good use of support staff to hear pupils read each day. The best teaching encourages pupils to apply their intellectual understanding as was demonstrated in a lesson where pupils were mapping the journey across the Mediterranean from the book 'The Voyager's Return'. Inadequate teaching is characterised by a poor understanding of the wider curriculum and the lack of the resources necessary to enhance learning and make it fun. Although the school evaluates teaching to be good, leaders are unclear about where the strengths and weaknesses lie because they have only just started to evaluate learning in classes.

Assessment and the framework for this are focused on the tests the pupils need to take to get into their future schools. Assessment is not effectively used to meet the individual needs of pupils or to identify the next stages in their learning.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is satisfactory overall. Behaviour is outstanding because high expectations have been set by the

headteacher and staff at the school. Pupils are polite and friendly to visitors and supportive of one another. They form a cohesive family group and the older pupils act as good role models for the younger ones. The school has clear guidance on how to deal with bullying, but some parents have commented that children fight and that bullying incidences occur which are not resolved. This is partly due to the school not placing a high priority on developing pupils' independence, personal and social skills. However, children are clear where they can seek help if they need it.

There is good racial harmony and all get on well together although the school has no clear plans to promote moral or cultural development. Currently, pupils have too few opportunities to reach their personal potential through art, sport or music because of the narrow curriculum. Pupils prepare the assemblies and enjoy performing at the end of term, all of which helps build up their confidence and self esteem. The school promotes a culture of honesty and hard work; pupils enjoy school and attendance is very good. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures, have a good variety of educational visits and raise money for charities which enables them to have an understanding of people less fortunate than themselves. Despite this provision, they have limited understanding of the diverse community in which they live.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils is satisfactory. Pupils receive appropriate care and support throughout the school and all members of staff are trained regularly in appropriate aspects of child protection, first aid and fire prevention. Policies for pupils' welfare, health and safety are in place but not always regularly reviewed and rigorously implemented. For instance, the school still does not have a room specifically for children who are ill at school even though this was raised at the time of the last inspection. Plans are in place to make appropriate provision during this summer. There are now adequate washroom facilities for the number of children currently at the school and the school complies with requirements for recruitment, fire-safety, risk assessments and first aid.

Pupils know what constitutes a healthy life style and are encouraged to eat sensibly. Good opportunities exist for pupils to undertake regular exercise and plenty of time is allocated for this on the school timetable. There is an up-to-date plan for disabilities and discrimination. Parents' questionnaires indicate that communication with parents is an issue but many parents come into the school at the beginning and end of the day to talk to staff. The school holds an evening consultation meeting for parents in the spring term and sends reports home twice a year that comment on pupils' progress.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is inadequate overall because it is too formal in its delivery and is not based on nationally recommended child-initiated activities. Children do not have enough opportunities to explore their creative, technological and personal and social development. Tasks are, for most of the day, based on formal lessons directed by teachers. As a consequence, pupils are often

engaged in meaningless tasks which inhibit good progress. Too many children, as noted by parents, lack confidence and independence. 'We do a lot of colouring' said one boy.

The learning area for this age group is secure and supervised at all times. There is currently no free access to the outside environments so the children cannot make choices about where they want to work and play. Classrooms are formal, very small for the number of children and teachers are unable to set up role play areas, creative or imaginative areas or just places to sit and read a book or listen to a story tape independently. Children are articulate and can sustain good levels of concentration. However, their interaction with each other is unsatisfactory because children are not given enough opportunities to learn how to play and work together in their chosen groups. As a result, they do not learn how to share resources or work together by tolerating each other's opinions and differences.

The school lacks a clear understanding of what the provision should be because it has not evaluated the quality of what it provides against similar settings. This weakness related to relevant play opportunities was similarly raised at the last inspection and very little has been done to address it. There has been no clear leadership to ensure that the appropriate curriculum is followed and the necessary provision made. Members of staff are fully qualified and know what the school needs to do to improve the provision. Each kindergarten class has a full-time helper and the school is working closely with the local authority to bring about improved provision. Teachers do not plan regularly enough together and share expertise, although they support children well in gaining core skills in English and mathematics. Teachers do not plan lessons based on assessments of how well pupils are doing to inform future planning; lessons taught are based on subjects which are more suitable for the older pupils. Reading is monitored closely and recognised rightly as a key skill for young children.

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 and teaching (standard 1) and must:

- establish curriculum policies supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for technological, aesthetic and creative curriculum and implement these effectively (paragraphs 1(2) and 1(2)(a)(ii))
- strengthen teaching to ensure lessons are planned and effective teaching methods used, as well as suitable activities organised, so that the subject matter is appropriate for the age and aptitude of the pupils based on a good

understanding of their needs and prior attainments (paragraphs 1(2)(b), 1(2)(h)(ii), 1(3)(c) and 1(3)(d))

- ensure there is adequate preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life (paragraph 1(2)(j))
- establish immediately, or as soon as is feasible, the correct resources for the teaching of ICT, design and technology and an appropriate, planned Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum (paragraph 1(3)(f)).

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

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(l))
- improve classrooms which are too small in size to allow effective teaching, for the number, age and needs of pupils (paragraph 5(j)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- provide particulars of the complaints procedure so that parents know where they can access a copy (paragraph 6(2)(j)).

In order to comply with the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage the school must:

- fulfil the statutory requirements for the curriculum and assessment so that children's personal, social and academic needs are fully met according to their starting points
- ensure that the Early Years Foundation Stage classes are effectively managed and monitored to ensure equality of provision across all classes and that all children are helped to learn and develop to their full potential.

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:

- undertake more rigorous self evaluation, by key stake holders, so that the school has a more accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses

Inspection Judgements

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	Wimbledon Common Preparatory School
DCSF number	315/6062
Unique reference number	102690
Type of school	Pre-preparatory
Status	Independent
Date school opened	1919
Age range of pupils	4–8
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 151
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 7725
Address of school	113 Ridgway Wimbledon London SW19 4TA
Telephone number	0208 946 1001
Fax number	0208 946 1001
Email address	info@wimbledoncommonprep.co.uk
Headteacher	Mr Neil Worsey
Proprietor	Corporation of King's College School
Reporting inspector	Linda Kelsey HMI
Dates of inspection	18 June 2009