

Wandsworth Preparatory School

The Old Library, 2 Allfarthing Lane, London, SW18 2PQ

Inspection dates 26–27 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Pupils' achievement	Outstanding	1
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Quality of curriculum	Outstanding	1
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

This school is outstanding because

- The governors, senior leaders and staff have the highest aspirations for children. Senior leaders have established very effective systems to ensure that teaching is outstanding and children make outstanding progress in relation to their individual starting points.
- Children achieve exceptionally well in all areas of learning without there being an approach which is overly demanding. Teaching often uses inspirational methods that fire children's imagination and extend their thinking skills. The curriculum provides children with rich and varied opportunities for high-quality learning.
- Great emphasis is placed on creating a nurturing ethos in which children are encouraged to be proactive learners and can thrive. The staff support children in developing high levels of self-control extremely well and children's behaviour is exemplary.
- Children are exceptionally well cared for and feel very safe because the staff implement policies and procedures aimed at minimising risks and safeguarding children consistently and they are very well trained to do this work.
- The very large majority of parents and carers express a very high level of satisfaction with the school.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed six lessons or sessions taught by four different teachers and had conversations with children. Meetings were held with senior leaders, teaching staff and parents. Documentation and policies, particularly relating to safeguarding and welfare, health and safety, were scrutinised, as well as curriculum plans, teachers' assessments and children's work.
- The inspector also took account of the responses in six questionnaires completed by staff and 12 parental responses to Ofsted's on-line Parent View survey. The views of the governing body were sought through a telephone conversation with a governor.

Inspection team

Michèle Messaoudi, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Wandsworth Preparatory School is a new, non-selective, co-educational day school located in Earlsfield, in the London Borough of Wandsworth. The school was registered in July 2012 to provide education for up to 150 pupils aged from four to 11 years. It operates from a large building known as The Old Library. It uses alternative provision for sports, and for its Forest School which takes advantage of the learning opportunities provided by the natural woodland environment of Wimbledon Common.
- The proprietorial body is Wandsworth Preparatory School Ltd, which consists of two trustees. The school is part of the Bellevue Education group of schools.
- The school opened in September 2012 with one Reception class. There are currently 14 children, all of Reception age. None has a statement of special educational needs. There are no disabled children.
- There are two children who speak English as an additional language, one of whom joined the school with no English.
- The school aims to 'provide pupils with a nurturing, caring and warm environment where the unique talents of pupils are explored and developed'. Its principal education philosophy is that 'education should not simply be about examination results, reading, writing and arithmetic. It is about sparking curiosity and instilling a lifelong love of learning; having the courage to take risks, the confidence to ask questions and the desire to know not just 'what', but 'how' and 'why'".
- This is the school's first inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the leadership and management of the school as it grows by:
 - ensuring that leadership and management responsibilities are appropriately distributed between the senior leaders to maintain pupils' outstanding levels of achievement
 - developing middle management roles and the skills of middle managers to share the responsibilities of developing the curriculum and making checks on the quality of teaching and learning.
- Ensure that, as the roles of the governors are re-defined, highly effective arrangements are made to support and challenge the school in maintaining its currently very high standards.
- Further improve communication with parents and carers so that they all feel well informed of their children's progress and are confident that the school responds well to their concerns.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Outstanding

Children's achievement is outstanding. Children make outstanding progress in all areas of learning in relation to their varying starting points owing to two main factors. The enquiry-based curriculum and inspirational teaching enable children to play a dynamic role in their learning and to respond enthusiastically to levels of challenge that are exceptionally high. For example, when creating a fictional island inhabited by kings, queens, giants, witches, goblins and dragons, children explored the geographical and social features of the island and made a model together. When a storm split the island in two, the kings and queens became sustainability experts to survive on their new island. When their original island became at risk of being destroyed by the giants, children had to wear 'the mantle of the expert' and use their knowledge of the natural world to find ways of convincing the giants that trees are useful. Throughout these activities, children showed high levels of concentration, curiosity, creativity and independence. They also developed their literacy, mathematical and scientific enquiry skills exceptionally well in a context that fired their imagination.

By the end of Reception, children meet or exceed the expectations for their age. They achieve particularly highly in reading and writing owing to systematic teaching that meets their individual needs accurately and sensitively, without the children feeling pressurised, as noted by some parents and carers. They apply their knowledge of sound and letters to reading and writing for a wide range of purposes and most children confidently create their own sentences. Children's speaking and listening skills are extremely well developed through consistent opportunities to discuss their ideas in pairs, groups, or conversations with adults. Children who speak English as an additional language are particularly well served by these methods and make exceptionally rapid progress in English. Children's language development is also enhanced well by learning Spanish. Children also achieve highly in the mathematical area of space, shapes and measures, their knowledge of the world, and in their personal, social, emotional, physical and creative development. They deepen their understanding of geometry and its applications through their practical indoor and outdoor learning. Children have won an 'exercise in disguise' competition against other schools.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Outstanding

Children's outstanding behaviour and personal development are underpinned by exceptional provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school meets its aim of creating a nurturing ethos in which children's unique talents are explored and developed. Children thoroughly enjoy school and feel safe, as confirmed by parents and carers, and their attendance is good. The staff establish very positive working relationships based on mutual respect and maintain clear boundaries, which support children extremely well so they develop high levels of self-control and accept the consequences for making the wrong choice. Children's behaviour is exemplary. Children demonstrate acceptance of their differences and an appreciation of diversity. They willingly play with all children, whatever their cultural heritages, and parents and carers remark how quickly their children settle into the school. Children's awareness of diversity is promoted well through the curriculum and educational visits. Children demonstrate sustained application, concentration and participation when working through tasks or initiating their play. They listen to others and take turns to express their views. They take great pride in their accomplishments and some volunteered to show the inspector the island they had created.

Children's outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development supports their personal development extremely well. Their self-knowledge, self-confidence and self-esteem are promoted exceptionally well through weekly assemblies, the Forest School curriculum, philosophy and discrete lessons of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE). Children learn to reflect on the impact their actions or words have on others, that being kind and helpful to others makes them feel good and that the best remedy when they feel sad or lonely is to look out for good deeds to perform. This approach is very effective in building children's character and reducing bullying. Instances of bullying are very rare. Children have daily opportunities to serve the school community. For example, they conscientiously help to tidy up after lunch. They develop a strong commitment to acting as responsible citizens through the Forest School activities and the recycling of materials, as noted by parents and carers. Children demonstrate a good grasp of sustainability when taking on 'the mantle of the expert' and solving problems occurring on their fictional island. They gain an excellent awareness of the wider community and public institutions by visiting parks, farms, museums, theatres, art galleries and other schools. All issues are presented to the children in a balanced way, with children being given every opportunity to explore them and to reach their own conclusions.

Quality of teaching**Outstanding**

Outstanding teaching enables children to make exceptional progress in all areas of the curriculum. All staff are well qualified and, collectively, they have a wealth of experience and skills. They share the same very high expectations of what children can achieve and a common understanding of what methods help children to learn most effectively without 'hot housing' them and making excessive demands on them. They are willing to take risks and innovate. The result is inspirational teaching that develops children's knowledge, understanding and skills well beyond expectations for their age, as it sparks children's curiosity and enthuses children to explore the 'how' and 'why' of things. Methods such as 'the mantle of the expert' generate high levels of participation in children and develop their thinking, critical and creative skills extremely well. Staff observe children's verbal and written responses very carefully to make timely interventions when children need clarification and re-shape questions to maintain the right level of challenge to stretch all children. The planning of lessons is based on a thorough understanding of children's individual attainment, needs and aptitudes, and tasks are pitched at levels that consistently challenge children, resulting in children making excellent progress. Well-paced lessons, a variety of activities and very effective use of resources support children's concentration very well. All staff employ very effective strategies to re-engage children quickly when they see that their attention is about to wane and so succeed in promoting very high standards of behaviour and excellent attitudes to learning. Teaching assistants are deployed and briefed very effectively to support children's learning.

Very effective assessment systems enable the staff to form a well-rounded picture of each child's knowledge, understanding and abilities and to track their progress towards the expected goals. This comprehensive picture is reflected in very informative twice-yearly reports shared with parents and carers. External moderation ensures teacher assessments are secure. Information from assessments is consistently used to guide the teaching and the planning of activities to enable children to achieve as highly as possible. Information from assessments is robustly analysed to further improve the provision and prepare children's transition into Year 1.

Quality of curriculum

Outstanding

The outstanding curriculum is exemplary in significant elements. It provides children with rich and varied opportunities for high-quality learning and has an extremely positive impact on their personal development. The breadth of the curriculum includes all the required areas of learning for Reception and Key Stages 1 and 2, along with philosophy, Spanish taught from Reception and French taught from Year 2. One of the main strengths is the equal importance placed on indoor and outdoor learning, coupled with a deliberate emphasis on an enquiry-based approach. The Forest School curriculum is central to outdoor learning and is supplemented well by the use of the outdoor area as an additional classroom. In Reception, children have consistent opportunities to initiate their own learning, in addition to planned sessions in which they can initiate their own play. These opportunities are afforded by the enquiry-based approach and teachers' success in incorporating children's evolving interests into the planning of curriculum units. Specialist teaching in art, music, physical education, personal, social, health and citizenship education, and Spanish is another strength of the curriculum. There is an appropriate emphasis on reading, writing and mathematics, which are taught daily and systematically through a wide range of activities. The curriculum is well resourced and information and communication technology (ICT) is used daily to support children's understanding, develop their technological competency and use time effectively to accelerate their progress. A thoughtfully designed PSHCE programme permeates the whole curriculum and contributes exceedingly well to children's outstanding personal development. It includes weekly philosophy for children, and Forest School and enrichment activities. After-school clubs extend children's creative and physical skills.

The curriculum is exceptionally well planned. A skills-based strand is woven through all areas of learning, and consistent links between subject areas give children a coherent learning experience. High-quality schemes of work support the teaching extremely well and ensure that children can progress rapidly.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Outstanding

The outstanding provision for children's welfare, health and safety is underpinned by a strong commitment to training and consistent implementation of well-written and up-to-date policies and procedures aimed at safeguarding children, combatting bullying, and promoting high standards of behaviour, health and safety. While all the staff receive the appropriate training in child protection, full-time staff receive training that exceeds requirements. Robust recruitment procedures ensure that all staff and volunteers are properly vetted. The required recruitment checks are correctly recorded in a single central register. Risk assessments of the premises and of on-site and off-site activities, and fire safety checks are thorough. All staff are trained in first aid to levels suitable for the age range and one has specific Forest School health and safety training. Accidents are rare because staff are deployed well to supervise children throughout the day and children are taught how to keep safe and healthy. Consequently, children feel very safe and are exceptionally well cared for. Parents and carers have full confidence in the school's ability to keep children happy and safe. Children appreciate the highly nutritious meals provided by the school and eat all their food. They observe daily hygiene routines. They enjoy a wide range of physical activities that include swimming. All regulations for children's welfare, health and safety are met.

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Outstanding leadership and management are clearly focused on the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of the school's work and on securing the best outcomes for children. The governors ensure that the ambitious vision of a high-achieving school that does not over pressurise children is enacted by the staff. The senior leaders have established very effective systems for developing a nurturing ethos, checking the quality of education, tracking children's progress in all areas of learning, managing the performance of staff and evaluating the school's work. As a result, the curriculum is outstanding and contributes exceedingly well to children's outstanding behaviour and personal development. Teaching is inspirational and never less than good. The staff feel very well supported by the programme of continuous professional development. Self-evaluation is accurate. Further improvements are managed through a detailed three-year plan and inspired by links with outstanding schools. The governors robustly hold the senior leaders to account for all aspects of the school's performance. They also ensure that safeguarding arrangements are rigorous, and that all policies and procedures, including the complaints procedures, meet all the standards for independent schools and the statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The premises provide a safe and very pleasant and effective learning environment. Senior leaders', middle managers' and governors' roles are in the process of being redefined as the school grows.

Strong partnerships with parents and carers are promoted through an open-door approach and enhanced by the work of the parents' and teachers' association. Parents and carers receive all the information to which they are entitled and the large majority express a very high level of satisfaction with the school. However, a very small minority says that they are not sufficiently well informed of their children's progress and that the school does not always respond well to their concerns.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	138406
Inspection number	420253
DfE registration number	212/6000

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Day preparatory school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4–11 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	14
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Wandsworth Preparatory School Ltd
Chair	Mark Malley
Headteacher	Melissa McBride
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,045
Telephone number	020 8870 4133
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