

# Aston House School

Independent school standard inspection report

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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, 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.<sup>1, 2</sup>

The inspection of registered provision was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.<sup>3, 4</sup>

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Aston House School is a small independent day school which provides for pupils from two to 11 years of age. There are 80 pupils on roll of whom 19% speak English as an additional language; no pupil has a statement of special educational needs. The school is situated in a residential area of Ealing and is accommodated in two large Victorian houses that are a short distance apart from each other. One building is for the school's junior pupils who can join during the term in which they are three years of age and remain until they are 11; on this site there are 22 children who are in receipt of nursery funding. The other building is for the school's senior pupils who are aged from seven to 11 years. The school opened in 1995 and aims to 'help each child attain his or her full potential in terms of intellectual, physical and social development'. Before- and after-school care is provided for pupils on both school sites and was inspected as part of the school's inspection. The school was last inspected in November 2007.

## EVALUATION OF THE SCHOOL

Aston House School is successful in meeting its stated aims. The school provides a good quality of education and the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Pupils make good progress from their different starting points because the curriculum, teaching and pastoral support are good. Since the last inspection the school has worked to secure improvement and regulations concerning information for parents and carers and the school's procedures for handling complaints are now in place. Although the school now meets the vast majority of regulations, those not met at the time of the last inspection that concern the premises are still unmet. Similarly, while all checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children have been completed, they have not all been completed in a timely manner; as a result, safeguarding is satisfactory.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

<sup>3</sup> Schools which provide childcare for children from birth until the term in which they reach their third birthday must register this provision separately with Ofsted.

<sup>4</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2006/ukpga\\_20060021\\_en\\_4#pt3-ch2-pb4-l1g49](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2006/ukpga_20060021_en_4#pt3-ch2-pb4-l1g49)

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and follows the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and the National Curriculum for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2. Long- and medium-term plans for the different subjects are underpinned by commercially produced schemes of work. Opportunities for physical education are planned to make best use of local facilities so that pupils can enjoy a wide range of sports, while the planned programme for pupils' personal, social and health education is covered by a cross-curricular approach. The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular activities such as ballet, music, chess, computing, gardening and fencing. The before- and after-school care provision also provides good opportunities for pupils to socialise and to complete their homework if they wish. Within the curriculum, there is a strong focus on the teaching of English and mathematics, and lessons in French are taught from Nursery through to Year 6. In English, the teaching of grammar is a regular feature of lessons and pupils develop in confidence to write in a range of different styles. However, opportunities to write in other subjects are not as developed as they should be, for example in science where worksheets are often used, and this slows the development of pupils' writing skills, particularly in Key Stage 2. Additionally, pupils do not have enough opportunities to carry out investigations in science on their own. Pupils said this is one aspect of the curriculum that they would like to see improved. Provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well focused. However, targets set for improvement in pupils' individual education plans are sometimes too broad and do not give the small steps required so that pupils' progress can be regularly monitored and assessed. Nonetheless, given the wide range of needs and abilities that pupils have when they join school, they make good progress and achieve well given their different starting points.

Teaching and assessment are good. Strengths of the teaching observed, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, demonstrate the effective use of time in lessons, good pace and questioning, and in some classes, peer- and self-assessment is an integral part of the lesson. Pupils' work is regularly marked and in the best examples there are clear comments about what pupils need to do to improve; however, this quality is not consistent throughout school. Pupils are involved in the setting of targets to help them improve; for example in Year 2, the pupils were keen to complete their self-assessments against the targets recorded in their learning journal. However, the setting of challenging targets to aid pupils' improved attainment in English, mathematics and science is not yet underpinned by an analysis of pupils' assessment data. Assessment information is gathered from the school's own tests together with data from national and commercially produced assessments that are carried out on a regular basis in reading, spelling, English and mathematics. Pupils also sit common entrance examinations in Year 6 and most pupils are successful in gaining entrance to the schools of their choice.

## **SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF PUPILS**

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are caring and courteous and their behaviour is good. They take great pride in the roles and responsibilities that they hold; these include positions such as head boy, deputy head girl, house captains and vice captains, monitors and library helpers. Pupils are also involved in supporting the local community through, for example, sharing harvest produce, the choir singing at special events and by fund raising to help others in need, such as for the Great Ormond Street hospital; however, they said that they would like to do more. Similarly, while pupils know that they can share their views about school with the staff and through house meetings, there is not a regular and formal way in which their views can be collected and pupils would like this to improve. Nonetheless, pupils enjoy school and this is confirmed by their good attendance.

Pupils learn about institutions in the United Kingdom through the curriculum and through visits, for example, to places of cultural interest. They enter competitions; for example, as part of Local Democracy Week, pupils submitted suggestions to the Mayor of the London Borough of Ealing on what they would do if they were 'in charge'. The school recognises, however, that more could be done to ensure that all pupils develop a good understanding of the public institutions in the United Kingdom. Pupils develop a good understanding of other faiths through religious studies while their understanding and respect for others' cultures is developed particularly well as pupils readily share information about their personal beliefs and cultural heritage. Very good relationships are evident throughout the school and this in turn helps boost pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Pupils work together well and, given the good progress they make, are well prepared for their future economic well-being.

## **WELFARE, HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS**

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils is satisfactory. Policies have been updated and meet requirements. Through their training division, the owners have provided appropriate training for the staff, for example in safeguarding, paediatric first aid, first aid at work and food safety. Further training is planned in food hygiene to ensure requirements are met for all staff working in the after-school care provision and who are involved in food preparation. In respect of child protection, the designated child protection officer is booked to undertake the required additional training from a recognised national training authority. Risk assessments are completed and fire certification is carried out by the London Fire Brigade in addition to the annual fire and safety audit conducted by an independent consultant. All pupils are well supervised throughout the day and in the before- and after-school care sessions. Break times are staggered at the junior school site to ensure that the playgrounds are safe environments, especially for the younger children to use large toys and cars. Pastoral care is of high quality and parents and carers comment positively about the nurturing and family atmosphere provided for

their children. Incidents of bullying are rare and there are clear policies to promote anti-bullying and good behaviour. The school offers healthy snacks and lunches and there is a strong focus on keeping fit through planned opportunities for physical education. The school has updated its accessibility plan and it meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

## **SUITABILITY OF STAFF, SUPPLY STAFF AND PROPRIETORS**

The school has implemented appropriate checks for the appointment of staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with children and the checks are recorded in a single central register as required. However, procedures to ensure that checks are completed in a timely manner are not as rigorous as they should be.

## **PREMISES OF AND ACCOMMODATION AT THE SCHOOL**

The school's premises offer suitable environments for learning. Both school sites have libraries and provide rooms that are specifically used for art and music; there is an information and communication technology suite at the senior school. At the time of the last inspection, a number of issues were raised relating to areas for improvement. Although the buildings are in a satisfactory condition, some of the stairway glass on the senior site still requires attention to make it safe. The outdoor provision at both sites is restricted although there has been some improvement in terms of access for the pupils on the junior site. However, the hard outdoor area for older pupils remains small and very uneven; planned work for its improvement has not yet started. Similarly, planned work to install designated rooms on both sites for pupils who are ill has yet to begin.

## **PROVISION OF INFORMATION**

All regulations are met in respect of the information provided for parents, carers and others and all school policies are available upon request. While the school's website is informative, it is currently being improved to better provide up-to-date information about the school and its work.

## **MANNER IN WHICH COMPLAINTS ARE TO BE HANDLED**

The school's procedures for handling complaints meet all the regulations.

## **EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE**

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children join the Nursery or Reception classes with very different levels of ability and some who join are new to learning English. All children, regardless of their needs and abilities, make good progress and outcomes are good because of the school's good quality provision. Children settle happily and the staff work well with parents and carers to ensure that good pastoral care is provided for their children's needs. Similarly, when

children in the Early Years Foundation Stage remain at school to join the after-school care provision, they are well looked after and have a good range of resources for their use. Children are comfortable about making choices and use language well to talk to others about what they are doing. They learn about each other's different cultural backgrounds through music, artefacts in the classroom and by trying different food. They learn to share resources and play with imagination; they are cooperative and helpful and develop good social skills. Nursery children respond well to the classroom resources, and to those in the adjacent outdoor area, that provide good opportunities for learning. At present, children in the Reception class do not have regular access to an outdoor area. However, they respond well to class activities and are eagerly involved in the self-assessment of their work. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. Record keeping and sharing of information is achieved on a daily basis and during after-school monthly meetings. A very good partnership has been developed with the local authority which provides effective support in relation to identifying children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders have identified that further staff training is an area for development and are also aware of the need for all children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to have equal access to an outdoor curriculum.

## **COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.<sup>5</sup>

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises of and accommodation at schools (standards in part 5) and must:

- ensure that all glass on stairways meet safety requirements (paragraph 23 (i))
- provide appropriate facilities on both school sites for pupils who are ill (paragraph 23 (k))
- improve the surface of the hard outside area of the senior school building, to ensure that pupils can play safely (paragraph 23 (s)).

## **WHAT THE SCHOOL COULD DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER**

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- Improve the opportunities for pupils to conduct independent experiments in science and to write in different subjects across the curriculum.
- Analyse assessment data and use it to help the setting of challenging targets for pupils in English, mathematics and science.

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<sup>5</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made)

- Ensure that the targets set for pupils in their individual education plans indicate the small steps to be taken so that pupils' progress can be measured effectively.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, ensure Reception-aged children have regular access to an outdoor curriculum.

## 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

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		

## SCHOOL DETAILS

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Co-educational day school		
<b>Date school opened</b>	1995		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–11		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 39	Girls: 35	Total: 74
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 3	Girls: 3	Total: 6
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£3,750 – £9,300		
<b>Address of school</b>	1 Aston Road, Ealing, W5 2RL		
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8566 7300		
<b>Email address</b>	ahj.head@happychild.co.uk		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Paula Seabrook		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Happy Child Ltd		