



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report
Lion House School
Independent school
DfES ref no: 212/6391

Dates of inspection: 17 – 20 May 2004

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Introduction and summary

Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Lion House School was founded in 1985 as a nursery school and was expanded in 1992 to include a pre-preparatory department. It now consists of an afternoon playgroup for children from the age of two-and-a-half; nursery and reception classes for children aged three to five; and Year 1 and Year 2 classes for pupils aged five to seven. There are 127 children on roll, of whom 41 are under compulsory school age. Lion House School is situated in Putney, south-west London, and is accommodated in a former Victorian Methodist Sunday School. It is linked to the church, which is used for music lessons and school performances. The majority of the children live within a mile radius of the school.

Whilst aiming for high academic standards, Lion House seeks to *'help all children to reach their full potential whatever their ability, and to provide a curriculum that suits their needs, interests and expectations'*. The school aims to encourage curiosity, creativity and an enjoyment of learning, as well as independence, respect and understanding of fellowship and sharing.

Summary of main findings

Lion House is a successful and well established school that provides a good quality of education. Good teaching and a well-planned curriculum enable pupils to make good progress and reach high standards. Parents are supportive of the school and value the education and care it provides. The school is well led by the Principal, who has a clear vision for the present school and how she wants it to develop in the future. The pupils are happy at school; they enjoy learning and develop confidence and independence in its caring, family atmosphere. There are, however, a few aspects which the school needs to address in order to comply fully with the regulations.

What the school does well

- Lion House is a happy and well-ordered school;
- its pupils achieve high standards in national assessments in English, mathematics and science;
- the school is well led; staff show high levels of commitment to the care and education of pupils;

- rigorous assessment procedures are used effectively to monitor pupils' progress and inform lesson planning;
- the Foundation Stage is particularly well organised and helps children to make good progress; and
- the curriculum is well planned and organised, and is enriched by specialist teaching, extra-curricular activities and educational visits.

What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations

- Keep a separate record of sanctions imposed on pupils for serious disciplinary offences besides that currently maintained in individual pupils' records;
- ensure that there are adequate facilities for the hygienic preparation of food by providing a separate sink in the Foundation Stage area for the preparation of snacks; and
- provide a clear time scale for managing any complaint.

Next steps

Whilst not specifically required by the regulations to address this point, in its drive for further improvement the school may wish to consider the following:

- As part of the assessment procedures, the school should devise a marking policy to create greater consistency between teachers' approaches and to help pupils improve.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The curriculum makes very good provision for the pupils' academic, physical and personal development. The curriculum is well supported by clearly written policies which provide an overview of the content in each subject and which are supplemented by detailed weekly and daily plans. These plans take account of individual pupils' needs and assessments of their progress.

Planning provides for the whole of the Foundation Stage in a well co-ordinated way. The curriculum is carefully linked to the Stepping Stones of the Foundation Stage in both the nursery and reception classes, and the great majority of pupils fully attain the Early Learning Goals by the age of five, with many going beyond these. The Foundation Stage provides a good range of activities including a very good introduction to personal and social learning which encourages pupils to share and to work with one another. The children enjoy their time in school and show a willingness to learn.

The curriculum for pupils of compulsory school age includes all subjects of the National Curriculum. In addition to these subjects, there is a programme for religious education (RE) and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Pupils are not selected for entry to Lion House on the basis of ability, but they achieve well and reach standards well above the national average for their age group in the Key Stage 1 National Curriculum assessments for English, mathematics and science. The school also develops pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT) to a good standard in several subjects. Computer skills are taught in the ICT room and are also applied using computers located in classrooms.

A good variety of visiting speakers and educational visits to museums, art galleries and parks provides valuable opportunities for pupils to learn from first-hand experience. There are several extra-curricular clubs on offer, which are designed to meet the needs and interests of the children, including art and craft, computers, French and yoga. The school also liaises with a local ballet school to provide lessons for pupils after school in the church. All these activities make very positive contributions to the curriculum.

The quality of the teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching is good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching in the 26 lessons seen. Teachers know their pupils well and have established very good relationships with them, which is reflected in the way lessons are conducted. All pupils gain places at suitable preparatory schools and some gain scholarships. Lion House is an inclusive school that provides individual care for pupils who require it. All classrooms and corridors present colourful and attractive displays of pupils' work and information. The school has a range of good quality, well organised resources to support learning across the curriculum. Good use is made of specialist teaching in music, ICT, drama and gymnastics. In addition, children

receive specialist coaching at the nearby lawn tennis club and swimming lessons at Putney Leisure Centre.

Teachers expect their pupils to behave well and work hard, to the best of their ability. Lessons are well planned, with clear objectives for learning. They are conducted in a purposeful working atmosphere with a good balance of direct teaching, activity and opportunity for pupils to speak about their work. Careful explanations and effective questioning are features of the good teaching seen. Pupils enjoy learning, are keen to offer ideas and suggestions, and work diligently. Classroom assistants make a valuable contribution to the teaching; they are well briefed on the activities for the day and work well in partnership with the class teacher.

The school has rigorous assessment and recording procedures to identify the needs of individual pupils, to monitor their progress, and to inform the planning of lessons. These take the form of questioning, short tests and formal assessments. Good use is made of observational assessment in the Foundation Stage, where pupils' progress and development are noted against the Early Learning Goals. The Foundation Stage Profile is also completed, involving all staff in the nursery and reception classes. The cohesive approach to planning, teaching and assessment is particularly effective in the Foundation Stage, where careful monitoring by the early years co-ordinator ensures coherence and consistency. This approach could usefully be extended into Key Stage 1.

Pupils are set individual targets from the reception class onwards, to encourage them to do their best and attain high standards. Whilst pupils' work is marked regularly, the comments do not always provide clear feedback to pupils on how to improve their work in the future. The progress of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is monitored closely by their class teacher and the special educational needs co-ordinator. The part-time teacher for SEN works effectively to support the learning of individual pupils where appropriate.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Lion House provides effectively for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school places great store by developing pupils' self esteem, confidence and respect for themselves and others; this is achieved effectively. Emphasis is placed on courtesy and caring for others. The caring attitude shown by the staff towards the pupils strongly encourages mutually supportive relationships between the pupils, who show sensitivity towards each other's feelings. As a result the school is a happy, secure community where pupils are keen to learn. The pupils commented on how happy they felt in school; they believe that their teachers care about them and listen to them.

The staff set high expectations for pupils' behaviour and teach them to understand right from wrong. The school operates as an orderly community and the pupils behave very well in

school and on trips out. The school has established a system of rewards to highlight particularly kind and considerate behaviour.

The curriculum contains a programme of PSHE and RE that covers a range of topics appropriate to the pupils' ages, and this helps them to appreciate their own and other cultures and faiths. The school enjoys good relationships with the adjoining church and participates in its activities such as the annual Action for Children celebration. Christmas and Harvest celebrations are held in the church, along with musical events. Regular visits from the NSPCC and Barnados broaden the pupils' knowledge of the work of such organisations and encourage them to consider how they might contribute to society.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Overall, the school makes appropriate provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils. Policies have been prepared and implemented for most aspects, and they are available to the parents. These include good behaviour, the prevention of bullying, child protection and the health and safety of pupils whilst on educational visits.

Action has been taken on the recommendations of the Fire Authority. First aid records are carefully maintained, as are the admissions and attendance registers.

Staff are well deployed both within the school and whilst taking pupils to nearby facilities such as the swimming pool and tennis club. The pupils' good behaviour is very evident whilst in school and also when walking to sessions outside school in an orderly and sensible manner.

At present the school does not keep separate written record of any sanctions imposed on pupils for serious disciplinary offences. Whilst such a record has not been needed thus far, provision should be made.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets almost all the requirements for registration.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *keep a separate record of sanctions imposed on pupils for serious disciplinary offences besides that currently maintained in individual pupils records (paragraph 3(8)).*

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school works hard to achieve its success. The Principal has developed very good management systems and is supported effectively by the teaching and non-teaching staff.

The staff are appropriately qualified. The full time staff is supplemented by a number of part time staff with specialist qualifications in their teaching areas. They include staff employed at nearby local facilities such as the swimming pool at the leisure centre as well as sports coaches employed by the school.

The school ensures that appropriate checks are made on all staff prior to appointment. The legal requirements are fully met.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are appropriate for their current use. Classrooms are of a good size and very good use is made of a variety of additional facilities. These include the adjoining church which is used for music, gymnastics and yoga. Also within walking distance are a leisure centre swimming pool, a tennis club, Putney Arts Theatre and a park giving the school access to excellent facilities which it uses effectively. The outdoor play area at the school is limited, but care is taken to ensure that only small groups use it at any one time.

The nursery occupies a large room which is well organised into appropriate activity areas in which small groups of pupils can work and play. An adjoining art and snack preparation area currently has only one sink in which art materials and drinking cups are washed; separate provision should be made for these purposes. The two reception classes adjoin the nursery and share its toilet facilities. These are appropriate.

School meals are cooked on the premises and are enjoyed by the pupils. Lunchtimes are well organised social occasions.

Classrooms and corridors contain impressive displays which celebrate the pupils' work effectively. Those in classrooms clearly demonstrate individuals' progress during the year in all subjects of the curriculum.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets almost all the requirements for registration.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *ensure that there are adequate facilities for the hygienic preparation of food, by providing a separate sink in the nursery area for the preparation of snacks, (paragraph 5(m)).*

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

Parents are offered a good range of information about the school, including regular newsletters. There is an attractive and informative prospectus, which is supplemented by a parents' handbook. These include information about the school aims, the curriculum and staff. The school's policies are available to parents, although much of the information is also given verbally. The principal and staff meet parents on a daily basis and this helps to create good informal links between home and school. Parents find the school approachable if they have a problem or concern.

Parents feel well informed about their children's progress. Parent-teacher meetings are held in the autumn and spring terms, and written reports are issued at the end of the school year. An open day in the summer term provides another opportunity for parents to gain information about their children's progress and development. During the year, parents are invited to attend a range of performances of music and drama by the pupils in the church and at the local theatre.

The school enjoys the support of parents and actively encourages them to participate in school life. Parents help in the nursery and with art projects; they listen to children reading; they are involved in school productions and events such as the parent choir and in compiling the Lion House Cookbook. The school has an active parents' fundraising committee which organises summer fairs.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints

The school has recently updated its complaints procedures to comply with the requirements of the Education Act 2002. The revised procedure fully meets the regulations apart from not setting a clear time scale for managing any complaint received. The procedures are outlined in policy documents available for all parents and they are summarised in the parents' handbook. These are appropriate arrangements.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *provide a clear time scale for managing any complaint (paragraph 7(c)).*

School details

Name of school:	Lion House School		
DfES ref number:	212/6391		
Type of school:	Nursery and pre-preparatory		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	2 ½ to 7 ½ years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 30,	Girls 21,	Total 51
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys 38,	Girls 38,	Total 76
Annual fees (day pupils):	Playgroup		£805
	Nursery		£1,200
	Reception, Year 1 and Year 2		£2,200
Address of school:	Lion House School The Old Methodist Hall Gwendolen Avenue LONDON SW15 6EH		
E-mail address:	lionhsp@yahoo.com		
Telephone number:	0208 780 9446		
Fax number:	0208 789 3331		
Headteacher:	Miss H J Luard		
Proprietor:	Miss H J Luard		
Lead Inspector:	Mrs Jill Arnold		
Dates of inspection:	17 – 20 May 2004		

Notes