

St Faith's at Ash School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration	886/6059
Unique Reference Number	119008
Inspection number	329722
Inspection dates	5–6 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Heather Yaxley HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended.

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
T 08456 404040

www.ofsted.gov.uk



Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

St Faith's School at Ash is an independent school for boys and girls aged three to eleven years. There are currently 220 pupils, taught in 17 class groups. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) comprises five classes for 52 children. Admission to the school is non-selective. The school opened in January 1987 on the site of a former independent school, close to the town of Sandwich. The present owners purchased the school in 1997 and one of the proprietors is also the headteacher. The school was last inspected in July 2005 and the nursery provision was inspected in November 2004. The school aims to prepare pupils for entry to grammar schools in Kent. In addition, the school endeavours '*to give all our children every possible opportunity to flourish and achieve their full potential*' and '*believes in helping children to discover more about the world outside the classroom.*'

Evaluation of the school

St Faith's is a good school, including good provision for children in the EYFS. A warm, caring ethos is clearly evident to visitors. Many of the staff have worked at the school for some time and know the pupils and their families very well. The pupils are polite, considerate and courteous. Almost all of the regulations are met and all of those not met at the time of the last inspection now meet the requirements.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good, including that for the EYFS. The curriculum is supported by recently revised policy documents and is based on the National Curriculum and religious education. Teachers' planning is informed by programmes of study for all subjects. In most cases, schemes of work provide good guidance although some are not complete, such as those for information and communication technology (ICT) and personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE). Curriculum planning for pupils in Year 6 is not as thorough as that for other years. For example, there is an imbalance in pupils' learning opportunities because programmes of study, and the time for, PSHCE are reduced to allow additional time to study mathematics. This has occurred as a result of the date for the 11+ examination having been brought forward. The school has plans to correct this imbalance later in the year. The school's long term plan ensures that that any imbalance will not exist. Drama, music and sport feature strongly within the

curriculum and help develop pupils' self-confidence and physical skills. A wide range of visits, including a residential stay, make an effective contribution to pupils' personal development. A variety of well supported clubs and activities are offered before and after the school day at extra cost. Throughout the curriculum, a strong emphasis is given to the development of literacy and numeracy. This supports pupils' basic skills in all subjects and prepares them effectively for end of school tests to determine their secondary placement.

The quality of teaching is good across all key stages, although it does vary to an extent across the school. The teaching of French is particularly strong. In most lessons expectations are high. Teachers plan activities in detail so that pupils have plenty of opportunities to reflect upon their learning and extend their thinking. This ensures a good mix of teachers imparting their knowledge and pupils actively engaged in developing the relevant skills and understanding. Some lessons are not as well planned so lack sufficient information to ensure that tasks are effective in achieving the learning objectives. Occasionally, learning opportunities are limited by an over reliance on working through worksheets and workbooks. Similarly, although teachers comment on pupils' effort when marking work, comments are not always helpful for them to move their learning and thinking forward. The use of ICT to support learning in lessons is at an early stage, although developing well alongside the upgrading of resources. Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and are keen to develop their practice. Staff training needs have already been identified so that teachers can keep up-to-date with good primary practice, including that for the EYFS. Specialist teaching from peripatetic teachers significantly enhances the teaching of languages, music and sport. Good arrangements are made to support pupils with additional learning needs.

Pupils attain high standards and make good progress from their starting points in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave St Faith's. The vast majority of pupils move on to grammar schools. The school's procedures and practices to assess pupils' achievements are satisfactory. A new tracking system shows pupils' attainment from one year to the next and the assessments that inform this tracking are thorough and appropriately spread across each term. As yet, the analysis and evaluation of the amount of progress that pupils make from their starting points is at an early stage and assessments are only available for English and mathematics.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. When given opportunities to reflect upon issues, the pupils respond well, for example, when considering the importance of birthdays during an assembly. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, such as the completion of homework and getting to lessons on time. Some have additional roles that help the school run smoothly and others are recognised as house and sports captains. The pupils hold very positive views about school. However, there are no formal opportunities for pupils to express their views about school life and several have concerns that their views are not sufficiently taken into account. Nevertheless, pupils say that they feel

able to approach staff if they have any problems. Pupils clearly enjoy being at school as shown by their good attendance and punctuality. Good behaviour in lessons and around the building contributes to the peaceful atmosphere that pervades the school. Pupils understand and respond well to the high expectations of staff. Courtesy and respect are features of everyday life at St Faith's.

Through the PSHCE programme, pupils understand issues about relationships, making choices about staying fit and healthy, and dangers posed by harmful substances. Participation in physical education is good and regular competitive sporting fixtures add much to the personal and social development of those taking part. Pupils' cultural development is strong. They have many opportunities to learn about their own culture and institutions and services in England, as well as other faiths and cultures in the community and the world. The pupils actively support local charities and those further afield, including the sponsorship of a child in Africa. With well developed basic skills, preparation for pupils' economic well-being is good.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school's provision for the pupils' welfare, health and safety is good and given high priority. A range of policies and procedures ensure appropriate attention to maintaining a safe environment for pupils. Some policies, such as those for child protection and first aid, while meeting requirements, would benefit from additional detail to specify actions to be taken in particular circumstances and events. Similarly, a disability and discrimination action plan is in place but does not take full account of how to improve access to the curriculum. Appropriate checks are made with the Criminal Records Bureau on the suitability of staff but not all the required suitability checks are in place as there is no policy or set procedure for the recruitment of staff. There is an appropriate behaviour policy with a suitable system of sanctions to deal with incidents of inappropriate behaviour. There have been no serious incidents which have led to sanctions. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and report that there is very little bullying. Staff are diligent in their supervision of pupils, have high expectations for behaviour and attitudes, and are good role models. There are good opportunities for pupils to take exercise. Healthy food is provided at lunchtimes but pupils have few options from which to choose and are not provided with fruit on a frequent basis. This is a concern raised by some pupils and families. Access to the site is through a driveway between houses, off a narrow road. This creates potential problems when pupils arrive by car but the school has sensible arrangements in place to ensure smooth transitions at the start and end of the school day.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

A single central record of checks made to ensure the suitability of staff to work with children is now in place. However, it shows that references and checks for medical fitness and employment history have not been sought for all staff.

School's premises and accommodation

The school occupies a five-acre site, providing ample space for teaching and recreation. There has been considerable investment to improve the accommodation and resources since the last inspection. The office block has been rebuilt, windows identified as sub-standard have been replaced and ICT resources have been upgraded. Some areas of the school are in need of decoration and refurbishment and an ongoing plan to improve the accommodation is in place. The current provision for pupils who are ill in school does not meet the requirements.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Parents are provided with an adequate range of information some of which has recently been updated, such as the school's prospectus and newly launched website. There is still some work to do to ensure both formats contain the same information. Parents and carers are kept informed by regular newsletters, daily contact with staff and open evenings. Just over one-half of families responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and the overwhelming majority are pleased with the school's work. A small number would like more information about their children's progress. Recent improvements to reporting progress are therefore timely and provide adequate information. A significant number of parents say that they do not understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints. This has recently been added to the prospectus but the facility for parents and carers to request the number of complaints made under its procedures during the previous year is not published as required. Last year, the school received no formal complaints.

Procedures for handling complaints

The complaints policy meets all requirements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The EYFS provides children with good opportunities for learning and development. As a result, children make good progress from their starting points and enter Key Stage 1 with knowledge and skills that are above those seen nationally. Children achieve well across all areas of learning. In line with the school's ethos, teaching tends to be more formal than in other EYFS settings. An over reliance on worksheets and workbooks sometimes stifles independent application of skills that have been learned. Nevertheless children work very well with adults and with one another, demonstrating good social skills and very positive attitudes to learning. Children demonstrate that they are beginning to understand their own responsibilities and they behave very well. Good attention to forming letters and numbers correctly provides the children with firm foundations for developing a clear handwriting style.

Although medium term plans address each of the six areas of learning, there is a lack of consistency and overarching planning to ensure continuity and progression

between the Nursery, Reception and Key Stage 1 classes. Good, thorough assessments of children's achievements take place on a planned basis and also less formally to capture the moments when a child achieves something for the first time. Recent revisions to this system have enhanced the quality of this information. Assessments now align closely to the ages and stages of child development and individual records provide a comprehensive profile of children's achievements. Staff are keen to develop the provision further and are making good use of recent training to reflect upon their current practice. The outside play areas are not suitable for extending learning opportunities for children, although the school has made plans to remedy this. In contrast, the classrooms provide children with vibrant and lively places in which to learn. The safeguarding and welfare of the children are effective and are given a high priority.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ("the Regulations"), with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- prepare and implement a formal procedure for the recruitment of staff (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff ensure that references and the required checks for medical fitness and employment history are obtained (paragraph 4(2)(a)).

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

- provide appropriate facilities for those who are ill (paragraph 5(l)).

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

- ensure that parents are aware they can request the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

School

- improve tracking of pupil progress
- improve and implement revised schemes of work
- seek formal ways to harness and respond to pupil views.

EYFS

- improve medium and short term planning so that there are clear and consistent links in children's learning through Nursery and Reception years
- improve the outside learning area
- improve the balance of formal teaching and purposeful self-directed activities.

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	St Faith's at Ash School		
DCSF number	8866059		
Unique reference number	119008		
Type of school	Preparatory primary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	January 1987		
Age range of pupils	3-11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 108	Girls: 112	Total: 220
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 9	Girls: 16	Total: 25
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)	£2,860 - £5,871		
Address of school	5 The Street Ash Canterbury Kent CT3 2HH		
Telephone number	01304 813409		
Fax number	01304 813409		
Email address	st-faithsatash@tinyworld.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr S Kerruish		
Proprietors	Mr S Kerruish and Mrs C Kerruish		
Reporting inspector	Heather Yaxley HMI		
Dates of inspection	5-6 November 2008		