

Eagle House School, Mitcham

Independent special school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton

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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.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Eagle House School was established in 2004 on its present site in the centre of Mitcham, Surrey. It is housed in a large, listed, early eighteenth century building, with additional accommodation constructed at a later date. The school provides education for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and associated social and communication difficulties. There are currently 51 pupils on the school roll between the ages of five and 12 years. The school accepts children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, but no child receives government funding. All the pupils have statements of special educational needs which relate to autistic spectrum disorders. The school has recently admitted more pupils with additional complex needs associated with their autism. Pupils are placed at the school by a number of local authorities in London. The school expresses the aim that 'all of our pupils will have a sense of achievement, raised self esteem and will leave us with a positive attitude towards their life and learning'. The school was last inspected by Ofsted in December 2008 when it met all the requirements for registration.

Evaluation of the school

Eagle House School provides a good quality of education and the school's mission to help pupils to gain a sense of achievement and raised self-esteem is effectively met. Pupils are happy and enjoy school. As a result of effective teaching and an innovative curriculum which matches the pupils' needs, pupils make good progress. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and their welfare, health and safety, are outstanding. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. All requirements regarding safeguarding are effectively met. The school has improved and continues to meet the regulations.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good, including that for the Early Years Foundation Stage. It has been considerably developed following the last inspection and is still in the process of being refined. Its planning involves the teaching staff and the multi-disciplinary team of speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, educational psychologists and the music therapist. The curriculum has been adapted to meet the specific needs of the pupils and includes all the required areas of learning. Courses related to the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and Social Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) are integrated into the curriculum. The curriculum is planned to help the pupils to make links between their learning and skills in different subjects, so as to develop problem-solving approaches which they can then apply to their everyday life. As the curriculum is increasingly put into practice and developed, this feature is enabling pupils to make better sense of the world around them. Each pupil's statement of special educational needs is addressed effectively through their detailed individual education plan (IEP), reviewed termly by the whole team with new targets set relating to each pupil's specific needs. Thorough annual reviews are undertaken with the placing authorities. Personal, social and health education is well documented and embedded in school life. Each Friday, pupils have the opportunity to take part in a wide range of club activities. The curriculum is enhanced through visits outside school and visitors to the school, which have recently included African drummers.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. There is a calm, purposeful working environment with positive relationships between staff and pupils. All staff, including the wide range of therapists, collaborate in planning lessons and are well informed about the very specific needs of the pupils. All lessons are structured well with a variety of meaningful and appropriately matched tasks, which help the pupils to increase their knowledge, understanding and skills. The pace of most lessons is well matched to the pupils' ability levels; staff are flexible in their approach and adapt their lessons when necessary to meet their pupils' specific needs. Where newly appointed staff are still developing an in-depth knowledge of the pupils' needs, the pace is not always ideal. Some lessons include really challenging tasks for the most-able pupils and they respond well. For example, in a mathematics lesson introducing algebra, one such pupil quickly understood the concept, saying, 'It's really easy when you get it in your head.' Staff establish effective communication with the pupils using a range of teaching methods, including visual signals. The interactive whiteboards are used effectively for teaching. Independent learning is encouraged; this was effectively demonstrated when pupils delighted in mixing cornflour and water, and feeling it change texture in their hands. The learning support assistants are very supportive and know the pupils very well. Resources are good and used effectively.

Staff assess the pupils' learning well during lessons, giving them opportunities for self-assessment. Following the last inspection, the school was recommended to develop its assessment and monitoring systems. Progress is now referenced to national norms such as P-levels or National Curriculum levels. Milestones in pupils'

progress are also recorded through evidence sheets, closely linked to each pupil's IEP. Tests and assessment data show that pupils make good progress.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils and of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. There is a very friendly, welcoming atmosphere in the school. The pupils are happy and enjoy their life at school, which parents and carers confirmed overwhelmingly. Attendance is good. Religious education, including the study of world religions, is taught sensitively to take account of the pupils' levels of understanding. Weekly celebratory assemblies have recently included harvest celebrations with a visit from the local vicar. Pupils are learning the difference between right and wrong, and staff are excellent role models. They are attentive and responsive to pupils' needs, enabling them to thrive and grow in self-confidence. Pupils are eager to share their positive views of the school with visitors. Teachers' expectations about pupils' behaviour are high. They use simple management techniques which pupils understand and which consistently reward good behaviour and work. As a result of this skilled management, pupils come to be able to manage their own behaviour to an outstanding degree. Pupils learn to take responsibility for simple classroom tasks. As the pupils are developing an increasing sense of responsibility and awareness of social situations, the school has, rightly, realised that it can investigate ways to give pupils a greater say in the life of the school. Pupils undertake a good range of activities locally; for example, they visit the library weekly, attend the local barber's shop and engage with pupils in a local primary school. Pupils visit many places to increase their understanding of the world around them and have recently been to Hampton Court and the Science Museum. A wide range of visitors to the school helps to develop pupils' social awareness and understanding of the community.

The school encourages pupils' cultural development very effectively. There is a wide cultural mix within staff and pupils, and racial harmony is very effectively promoted. This occurs routinely through subjects such as music, art, English, religious education and history but specific events are planned regularly. Pupils are being equipped well with the skills necessary to ensure their future economic well-being.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The welfare, health and safety of the pupils and the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are outstanding. Pupils are given consistent and very close adult attention at all times. The school has devised a detailed and extensive range of policies which pay due regard to national guidance. All of the policies are regarded as active working documents so that their application is consistent. These include policies for anti-bullying, health and safety, including visits outside school, behaviour management and safeguarding. The designated persons responsible for safeguarding are trained annually in both safeguarding and safer recruitment. All staff are also trained annually in safeguarding. The very detailed policy fully meets the

requirements and is available to parents and carers. Staff are very well informed of the content of the policy. The school carefully risk assesses all classroom activities, the school premises, individual pupils and visits outside the school, and has improved these procedures considerably since the last inspection. A large number of staff are trained in first aid, including paediatric first aid, and accidents are very carefully recorded. Pupils are encouraged to bring healthy food for their lunch and they show awareness of the importance of healthy eating. The school is well aware of a number of specific dietary requirements for individuals and ensures that they are meticulously met. Pupils are helped to develop an awareness of personal safety at the same time as they are encouraged to extend their tolerance of new situations. Many opportunities are available for regular exercise, including weekly swimming and gymnastics. The precautions for fire prevention are thorough, with a detailed risk assessment undertaken, all fire appliances checked annually and fire drills undertaken regularly and recorded accurately. The admission and attendance registers fully meet the regulations. The school fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and has devised and implemented a detailed three-year accessibility plan.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

Procedures for checking the suitability of all staff are robust, and meet all requirements. The required single central record of such checks meets requirements.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The premises and accommodation are suitable and enable pupils to learn safely and effectively. The school is located within two large, well-maintained buildings. The school has imaginatively adapted the accommodation within the listed building and it effectively supports pupils' learning. There are good specialist facilities. The grounds include separate play areas for each age group.

Provision of information

The school provides all current and prospective parents and carers and placing authorities with a clear, accurate and up-to-date range of information. The information is made available through the prospectus, website and regular newsletters. Well-written reports are provided annually for parents and carers about their children's progress, along with the annual reviews of pupils' statements and termly speech and language reports. Parents and carers are fully included in the management of their children's special needs. All the parents and carers and placing authorities who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were extremely positive about the school and their children's progress. Many parents and carers made comments such as, 'the staff understand our child's needs and have made a big difference ... we feel we have been heard and not ignored ... my child has achieved so much in a short time ... excellent school'.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a set of written procedures which meets the requirements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Provision is good. High quality planning matches learning to children's individual needs as presented on their statements of special educational needs. It takes good account of their individual education plans, intense initial assessment and accurate weekly tracking.

The outcomes for children are good with excellent personal development and strong early gains in communication skills. As a result, children make good progress in relation to their starting points in their learning and development in all six areas of learning using the well-equipped indoor and outdoor learning experiences. Enjoyable phonics sessions (links between sounds and letters) and the use of the interactive whiteboard further consolidate learning and have a good impact on individual children's progress because they have fun in active learning. A positive difference is seen in a short period of time in the children's attitude to others and their ability to cope with the school situation, which has a positive impact on their learning. Children have an understanding of how to keep safe and have a healthy lifestyle. Behaviour is managed very effectively. Cultural awareness and tolerance are promoted well from the outset.

Leadership and management are good. The setting is currently in a state of flux due to recent staff changes. The new staff team are working very well together to establish a pattern of work that meets the specific needs of the children, thus ensuring continuing good outcomes. They are strongly committed to working closely with the systems and structures in place to maintain consistency. There is currently some limited expertise among support staff in working with children with this range of needs but the new team leader is providing successful guidance and support which overcomes any shortfall. Effective safeguarding procedures are fully in place and welfare, health and safety are very well supported. Relationships with parents, carers and other professionals are very good.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Ensure that newly appointed staff quickly develop an effective insight into the needs of the pupils to ensure appropriate pace.

- Consider ways in which the pupils can have more say in the community life of the school.

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

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Day special school for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders		
Date school opened	January 2004		
Age range of pupils	5–12		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 45	Girls: 6	Total: 51
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 45	Girls: 6	Total: 51
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£47,299		
Address of school	224 London Road Mitcham Surrey CR4 3HD		
Telephone number	020 8687 7050		
Email address	info@eaglehouseschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr A Simons		
Proprietor	Mr P Conrathe and Mr M Conrathe		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



4 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Eagle House School, CR4 3HD

Thank you for helping me to learn about your school. I really enjoyed my visit. It was good to meet you and to see how well you are doing. I am writing this letter to tell you what I found.

Eagle House School provides you with a good education which helps you to make good progress in your learning. There are plenty of interesting things for you to do both in and out of school. It was good to see how much you enjoy using the spaces you have to play and work in. You clearly enjoy school.

All the staff support you and they all want you to do as well as you can. Everybody works very hard to make sure that you get any help you or your family might need.

I have suggested that your school could carry through its plan to involve you more in the way things are decided. Your school is also going to try hard to ensure that all the staff know you and your particular needs really well.

I hope that you continue to try hard and enjoy your school life.

Best wishes
Yours sincerely

Jill Bainton
Lead inspector