

Spring Grove School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	886/6045
Unique Reference Number	118992
Inspection number	333831
Inspection dates	19 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005). The inspection of childcare was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.

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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, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Spring Grove School is an independent co-educational school for pupils aged from 2 to 11 years situated in the village of Wye in Kent. Opened in 1967, it is housed in a Georgian mansion built in 1674 and set in 14 acres of land. There are currently 206 pupils on roll; 22 of them attend part time, 47 are in receipt of nursery funding and 32 children attend the childcare provision. The school prepares pupils for the Kent selection process for grammar schools, as well as for entry to selective independent schools.

It seeks to continue the tradition of providing a family atmosphere in which pupils can flourish academically, socially, physically and emotionally in a supportive, caring environment. They are all encouraged by the school motto 'Always do your Best'.

The school met all the regulations for registration at the 2006 inspection.

Evaluation of the school

Spring Grove School offers a good quality of education and is a happy school where the pupils enjoy their education and achieve success in both academic and sporting activities. An outstanding curriculum and consistently good teaching enable pupils to make good and in some cases better progress. The spiritual, moral, social and personal development of the pupils is outstanding, as is the provision for those in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school has worked hard to implement the recommendations from the last inspection and it meets all the regulations but one concerning the provision of hot water in all wash basins.

Quality of education

The school provides a good quality of education as was the case in 2006. The curriculum is outstanding and meets the learning needs of pupils, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is relevant to the needs of the pupils and enables them to make good and in some cases better progress, particularly in their basic

skills. The school teaches the subjects of the National Curriculum and in addition prepares pupils for the entrance examinations to local grammar and independent schools. The school makes effective use of specialist teaching for information and communication technology (ICT), music, physical education (PE), French, art, design and technology and science. Such specialist teaching begins at a young age and increases as the pupils move up the school. There has been an increase in the provision for music and PE during the last year and the school has participated and achieved success in local music and sporting events. It has recently introduced the Spring Grove Challenge Award Scheme for the older pupils, designed to focus on extending their learning and skills. Both the most able and those pupils who need additional support are supported well.

An important element of the curriculum is the emphasis placed on exploring and making the best use of the outdoor environment, both in the Early Years Foundation Stage and throughout the school. The extensive school grounds and facilities are used for PE, games, art, science and environmental studies. The pupils have the opportunity and the freedom to explore this area at break and lunch times, while being carefully supervised. This enables the pupils to develop and pursue their own interests, and to work and play together happily. The older pupils are helped to become well-rounded individuals, ready for the next stage of their education; they are generally successful in gaining a place at their chosen school.

The curriculum is further enhanced by the wide range of extra-curricular activities after school and the range of visits outside school which during the inspection included a visit to Boulogne and Thanet. The older pupils have the opportunity to go on both day and residential visits to France and Wales.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good with many outstanding elements as was the case in 2006. The school is very effective in meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage with excellent opportunities for learning and development. The teaching engenders enthusiasm and enjoyment of learning among all pupils. The staff use a range of teaching methods to stimulate interest and encourage pupils to think and learn independently. Most lessons are conducted at a good pace and pupils are encouraged to discuss their work. The staff are confident and convey their enthusiasm for their subject, especially in PE and swimming, and pupils respond very positively. Pupils show good attitudes to their work and relationships are very positive at all levels. The most able pupils are provided with sufficient challenge in lessons, for example in mathematics where they are encouraged to move at a faster pace and complete more difficult tasks. The standards of creative writing have been improved since the last inspection and a new marking policy introduced. Older pupils confirm that they understand the progress they make from verbal feedback provided by their teachers and also the written comments on their work. The pupils are learning how to evaluate their work themselves, with younger pupils eager to gain a 'smiley face'. The purposes of most lessons are made clear but are not routinely revisited later to gauge success. The school has been using a range of assessment procedures for a number of years, and they report regularly to parents through written reports and six-weekly consultation

meetings. The school has identified that the current system is not meeting its purpose and is currently transferring to a new system of standardised testing to give them more accurate information and to better inform teaching and parents.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards and is a strength of the school. There is a friendly, welcoming atmosphere and pupils report that they are happy and enjoy their school life as shown by their high attendance. As one pupil commented 'everything is great about school', while another wrote 'Spring Grove is like one big adventure'. This was also confirmed by parents in the pre-inspection questionnaire who were very positive about the school, with just a small number expressing concern about the arrangements for dropping off and collecting pupils. The school is now addressing this issue. Pupils feel safe and well cared for by the kind and caring staff who are excellent role models. Instances of bullying are rare and pupils confirm that these are dealt with swiftly by the staff. There are planned programmes to enrich pupils' spiritual awareness with regular assemblies, including a well-attended Friday family assembly and religious education lessons.

Pupils' behaviour is outstanding, they are encouraged to be kind and courteous to each other and the older ones are careful to ensure that younger pupils are included at playtimes. Pupils play well together in the large school grounds and follow the simple school rules. There is a strong feeling of 'belonging' to the school. Pupils are eager to gain recognition for their efforts both to work hard and to behave well and be a source of pride to themselves and their parents. Pupils are encouraged to be aware of others and there is regular fund raising for both local and national charities. They make a strong contribution to their own community through their role as school councillors, and are proud to report that they have helped to introduce the salad bar at lunch. Recently there has been increased involvement in local community events, both sporting and musical. Pupils of all backgrounds mix well together and their cultural awareness is further enhanced through regular, planned activities such as 'food from other countries' weeks. Pupils' basic skills, together with their personal skills and their awareness of public institutions and services, prepare them well for later life.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The school makes good provision for safeguarding the welfare, health and safety of all pupils including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They have devised and implemented effectively a wide range of policies to ensure the safety of the pupils, for example in relation to anti-bullying, first aid, safeguarding procedures and health and safety on visits outside school. Activities both in school and on visits are carefully risk assessed. The school is vigilant about fire safety and conducts regular fire drills. A large number of staff hold first aid qualifications and accidents are recorded carefully. The members of staff responsible for safeguarding procedures have received up-to-date training and have trained the rest of the staff. All pupils are encouraged to eat healthily and most eat the school lunches. They take very regular

exercise through the planned programmes. The school has checked all staff for their suitability to work with children and holds the information on a single central register. They have devised an accessibility plan to meet their duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002. The premises are suitable for safe and effective learning but there is no hot water in some wash basins.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The school is very effective in meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, including those under the age of 3 and those aged from 3 to 5 years, and provides excellent opportunities for learning and development. An exciting range of activities, such as playing in the space ship, listening to chime bells or gardening outside, enables children to make the most of both the indoor and outside learning environment. The atmosphere is calm and caring and the provision for their welfare, health and safety is outstanding. They enjoy their learning and behave very well. Children show a good awareness of safety, love balancing and climbing, and drive the cars sensibly in all weathers. They especially enjoy the outdoor play area which is used very effectively. They eat healthy snacks and know they should drink lots of water. Adults work hard to help the children settle in and they quickly gain confidence and become part of the family atmosphere. Children, including those with learning difficulties, make excellent progress and achieve well across all the areas of learning, particularly in the areas of personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy. They are helped to learn and develop well. Planning is detailed and clearly linked to help all children reach their potential. Assessment is robust and enables teachers to give the children individual learning targets which they share regularly with parents, such as the Teddy Bears' activity sheets.

The Early Years manager demonstrates a secure understanding of the Early Years provision. She leads well and has built up a strong team with clear plans to bring about improvements. Safeguarding procedures are fully in place, with all children having key workers who know them and their families really well. The Early Years team has already identified self-evaluation as an important process. Currently there is limited ICT equipment for the children to use to promote teaching and learning.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of the one listed below.

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

- provide hot water in all wash basins (paragraph 5(a)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- consolidate the new assessment systems to ensure that the information gained is put to best use to inform teaching and parents
- review learning at the end of lessons to ensure that all pupils have understood its purpose
- continue the process of self-evaluation in order to develop children's work even further in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- introduce more resources in the Early Years Foundation Stage to promote the teaching and learning of ICT.

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	Spring Grove School		
DCSF number	886/6045		
Unique reference number	118992		
Type of school	Nursery/primary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1967		
Age range of pupils	2–11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 72	Girls: 80	Total: 152
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 14	Girls: 8	Total: 22
Number of pupils aged 0-3 in registered childcare provision	Boys: 9	Girls: 23	Total: 32
Annual fees	£3,096-£8,985		
Annual fees (childcare)	£2,557-£4,785		
Address of school	Harville Road Wye Ashford Kent TN25 5EZ		
Telephone number	01233 812337		
Fax number	01233 813390		
email address	office@springgroveschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Bill Jones		
Proprietor	Spring Grove School 2003 Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton		
Dates of inspection	19 May 2009		