

Tavistock and Summerhill School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	938/6231
Unique Reference Number	126144
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Inspection dates	29-30 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Hartland AI

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).

Inspection of funded nursery education was carried out under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and framework Act 1998.

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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.

Information about the school

Tavistock and Summerhill Preparatory School is a co-educational independent day school for pupils from 3-13 years of age. It is located in Haywards Heath in West Sussex. There are 124 pupils on roll. The school was established in 1973. It was registered in 2003. The school prepares pupils for entry into both maintained and independent schools. The school aims *'to challenge pupils to maximise their abilities and promote academic, musical and sporting excellence, as well as giving pupils opportunities to be involved in a variety of extra curricular activities'*. It thus seeks *'to build a firm foundation providing the skills upon which pupils can go forward to their senior schools.'* This is the school's first inspection. It was inspected by Ofsted Children's Services in 2005.

Evaluation of the school

Parents and pupils are very positive about the school and are right to be so as it is a good school where the pupils' behaviour is outstanding. The school provides good quality education and care, which caters effectively for the needs of the children. The school is particularly successful in promoting the pupils' personal development. The pupils are very happy at school. They feel safe and comfortable in the family atmosphere which the school very successfully creates. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. The quality of the curriculum and of teaching is good; as a result, the pupils become confident and articulate learners who make good progress and achieve good results in the national tests taken in Year 6. The school meets most of the regulations.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good and supported by suitable schemes of work and study programmes. It is broad and balanced and the range of displays around the school demonstrates the breadth of the curriculum. All the subjects of the National Curriculum are taught along with religious education (RE) although the content of this curriculum centres too exclusively on Christianity with insufficient attention given to other major religious traditions. French is taught from Nursery to Year 8. Latin is taught from Year 6 to Year 8 and older pupils also have the opportunity to learn Spanish. There is a good programme for personal, social and health education.

Computers support learning in most subjects. There is good provision for the Foundation Stage. The curriculum provides for all pupils of all abilities to make good progress. There are no pupils with a statement of educational need but the small number who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are, as parents testify, catered for well. Strong emphasis is given to improving the pupils' speaking and listening, reading, writing and numeracy skills.

The pupils are divided into year groups with all classes having less than fifteen pupils and some have less than ten. Lessons for the younger pupils are mainly taught by class teachers. As the children move through the school, from Year 3 onwards they increasingly receive specialist teaching in all subjects. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities which excite and motivate the pupils. A large number of pupils enjoy clubs such as drama, dance, craft, karate, football and gymnastics. A good range of visits and visitors further enhance the curriculum on offer. Visits to places such as the exhibition of Tutankhamen and residential trips for pupils in Year 5, 7 and 8 further enrich the curriculum. Visitors, such as a theatre company, bring the history curriculum to life. Pupils know the importance of healthy lifestyles and clubs and swimming support this feature. Healthy lunches are provided with a hot and cold option each day. Many pupils choose the healthy options that include salad and vegetables.

Pupils have outstanding interpersonal skills. Pupils are confident learners and take their responsibilities, such as lunchtime helpers, seriously and discharge them very effectively. The curriculum prepares pupils very well for the next stage of their education. The overall good progress in English and mathematics supports very effectively their future well-being.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall. In the Foundation Stage good lesson planning and teaching, the effective use of resources along with the eagerness of the children to learn, results in them making good progress. In the main school, lesson planning is securely based on longer term planning. The teachers successfully establish a calm, purposeful and respectful atmosphere through their patient and encouraging manner. The small classes ensure the teachers come to know each pupil well and this allows staff to provide good support for individuals in need of help and guidance.

As a result of the very good relationships that exist between staff and pupils, the children feel very safe and comfortable in the classrooms. There is a manifestly high level of mutual respect between the staff and the pupils. As a consequence, they are consistently very responsive to instructions, confident in asking questions, eager to answer them and to offer their views. They concentrate very well in lessons and are keen to complete the tasks given to them. The pupils' behaviour in lessons is outstanding. Their enjoyment is amply demonstrated by the high levels of engagement in all learning activities.

In the best lessons the lesson planning is comprehensive. Teachers use effective questioning to engage all pupils' understanding. These lessons proceed at a brisk pace and the pupils are provided with clear instructions and good explanations. The pupils are well managed and experience a suitable range of activities in lessons. The best lessons maintain a good level of challenge, for example, in a language lesson much of the questioning by the teacher was in French and pupils were expected to reply in French. The pupils are given good individual support and praise and encouragement are used well.

Where the teaching is less effective, the lesson planning lacks sufficient detail. The intended outcomes are not sufficiently precise or shared with the pupils so that they are clear about what they are expected to learn. In these lessons, the outcomes are rarely revisited during the lesson to remind pupils of the focus of the work or reviewed at the end of the lesson to ascertain what gains the pupils have made or to help them to consolidate what they have been learning. During the course of discussions, the board is not always employed to log key points to support less able learners.

The school uses an appropriate framework for assessment. Marking is regular in most subjects. In some subjects, such as English, it is usually detailed and contains comments not only on the quality of work but also provides clear indications to the pupils of what they need to do to improve. This is not yet a consistent practice across all subjects.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good and contributes effectively to their personal development. Pupils' understanding of other cultures and world religions is inadequate. The pupils' spiritual development is promoted well through assemblies and RE lessons, which provide opportunities for them to pray and reflect. Their behaviour in and around the school is outstanding. Their attendance is good. Pupils have a very good grasp of what is right and wrong and they display a considerable degree of maturity in their attitudes to learning. They are successfully helped to develop into lively, mature and responsible young people who are able to think for themselves and unafraid to express their views. Pupils understand well their responsibilities to others and to the wider community and make a good contribution to charities. They raise funds for charities, such as the shoe box appeal at Christmas, Comic Relief and Children in Need. The school supports the work of an orphanage in Africa.

The well organised break and dinner times are highly sociable occasions to chat and play amicably. The pupils are extremely polite and are comfortable in talking to visitors to the school. Their knowledge of British institutions is satisfactory. They know, for example, about the roles and responsibilities of the police, the fire service and the work of the local council. Pupils have good literacy, numeracy and

information and communication technology (ICT) skills that prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school's provision for the pupils' welfare health and safety is good. Their welfare and general well-being is given a very high priority. There is a series of detailed policy documents which meet requirements. A safe, healthy and strongly nurturing environment has been created for the pupils. The pupils have regular opportunities for exercise and make good use of local sporting facilities. Healthy food is provided at lunchtimes, with many salad options. There is an appropriate behaviour policy with a suitable system of sanctions that deal with incidents of inappropriate behaviour. There have been no serious incidents which have led to sanctions. Pupils report that there is no bullying. The size of the school ensures that the staff can supervise the pupils effectively at all times. There is appropriate provision for first aid with staff qualified to administer it. The first aid boxes are appropriately stocked and accidents are carefully recorded. The child protection policy meets requirements. The school has made the necessary provision for fire safety. The fire drill book is up-to-date and equipment is regularly checked. The health and safety policy is appropriate and includes risk assessments. The school correctly maintains an admissions register but the attendance registers are not kept strictly in accordance with requirements. Although the school has made some improvements, it does not fully meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 through a clear plan to increase accessibility.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school undertakes the full range of checks to ensure the suitability of all staff to work with children and young people.

School's premises and accommodation

The school occupies a large detached house and a number of additional modern buildings that have been erected in its grounds. These are, in many cases, purpose-built facilities for the school, such as additional classrooms. The school buildings and the environment are in a generally good condition and are well maintained. They provide a safe and effective learning environment. The school possesses a number of specialist facilities including an art room, a science laboratory, a drama room which doubles as a music room, a small design and technology room, a gymnasium, a covered swimming pool, an ICT suite, a room for cooking and a library. These effectively support pupils' learning. Although some classrooms in the main school building are small they are adequate for the small number of pupils in each class. There are appropriate facilities for pupils who are unwell. The school makes good use of local sports facilities to supplement its own.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Some, useful information, although too little to fully meet all the regulations, is contained in the school's prospectus and accompanying set of notes. It includes an expression of the school's aims and ethos and a list of all staff. However there are too few details about the arrangements for admissions, discipline and exclusions, or the provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language or who have special educational needs. It is not made clear to parents that the complaints procedure adopted by the school, together with details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, are available to them.

Most parents report that they are happy with the quality of the information they receive and with the progress that their children make. They receive a detailed progress report at the end of the autumn term, a very brief report at the end of the spring term and a full report at the end of the summer term. The annual reports provide a satisfactory amount of information but do not make it entirely clear, in each subject, the standards pupils have attained, whether they are making the progress of which they are capable, and exactly what they need to do to improve.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a detailed written complaints policy which sets out the procedures it will follow in the management of any complaint. It contains information on some, but not all, of the specific elements required by the regulations. There have been no formal complaints from parents.

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 those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (standard 2) and must:

- assist pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for cultures different from their own, in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions (paragraph 2(e)).

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

- ensure the attendance registers are maintained fully in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 3(9)).

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

- provide parents and prospective parents with particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for admissions, discipline and exclusions (paragraph 6(2)(e))
- provide parents and prospective parents with the particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with a statement of special education need and pupils for whom English is an additional language (paragraph 6(2)(f))
- ensure that parents are aware they can request particulars of policies relating to the complaints procedures and the number of complaints during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of procedures for handling complaints (standard 7) and must:

- ensure the procedure provides for the establishment of a hearing before a panel appointed by the proprietor of at least three people who have not been directly involved in matters detailed in the complaint (paragraph 7(f))
- ensure that one person on the panel is independent of the management and running of the school (paragraph 7(g))
- provide for the panel to make findings and recommendations which stipulate that the complainant, proprietors and headteacher and where relevant, the person complained about, are given a copy of any findings and recommendations (paragraph 7(i))
- keep written records of all complaints indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage, or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing (paragraph 7(j))
- ensure the procedure provides for correspondence, statements and records of complaints to be kept confidential (paragraph 7(k)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

Inspection of funded nursery education

Effectiveness of the funded nursery education

The provision is good.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage. Staff are committed to meeting the individual needs of the children; however, how they adapt the activities for the less able children is not clearly recorded. Staff identify children's individual needs and interests and feed these into daily planning, although the systems for recording this are rather informal.

Children are developing independence and autonomy in their learning because adults working with them are skilled in providing for and responding to their needs throughout the session. They play well together, and are kind and considerate to each other as they share and take turns. Children's behaviour is good; staff encourage children to respect and care for each other. On 'kindness days', children deliver notes to people in the school who help them. This strong emphasis means children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Staff use talk throughout the session to help children to gain the language to explain what is happening and to help them to anticipate what will happen next. Children's language is developed well through phonics and practise of letter formation. They listen attentively at story times and contribute enthusiastically to discussions, such as comparing the differences between toads and frogs. Children are developing maths skills through simple sums of subtraction and adding. They are absorbed and show great delight as they play outside digging the soil searching for mini beasts. Children are creative and their art work is attractively displayed. They have celebrated festivals from other cultures including Diwali and other cultural days. The needs of all children are being met.

The leadership and management of the setting are good. The management and staff work very well together meaning children learn and develop in a harmonious atmosphere. The quality of partnership with parents and carers is good. Information for the parents and carers is attractively displayed. Adults make time to talk to parents and to share information, so that they feel welcome, informed and involved in their children's life at school.

Recommendations or actions to improve the funded nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of the nursery education the registered person should take account of the following recommendations:

- ensure the planning reflects how activities will be adapted for the younger and less able children
- further develop systems to clearly show how children's individual needs and interests feed into the planning.

School details

Name of school	Tavistock and Summerhill School		
DCSF number	938/6231		
Unique reference number	126144		
Unique reference number (funded nursery education)	291361		
Type of school	Preparatory		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1973		
Age range of pupils	3-13		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 77	Girls: 47	Total: 124
Number of children receiving funded nursery education	Boys: 10	Girls: 42	Total: 52
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,415 - £9,465		
Address of school	Summerhill Lane Haywards Heath West Sussex RH16 1RP		
Telephone number	01444 450256		
Fax number	01444 458251		
Email address	info@tavistockandsummerhill.co.uk		
Acting Headteacher	Mrs J Gaughran		
Proprietor	Tavistock and Summerhill School Charitable Trust		
Reporting inspector	Ian Hartland AI		
Childcare inspector	Shan Jones		
Dates of inspection	29-30 November 2007		