

**Inspection report**

**Saddleworth Preparatory School**

**Independent school**

**DfES ref no: 353/6015**

**Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002**

**Dates of inspection: 19 - 21 June 2006**

## **INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY**

### **Purpose and scope of the inspection**

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 162A 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**

Saddleworth Preparatory School is an independent, co-educational school for boys and girls aged three to eight years. It was opened in 1988 by the current proprietor who is also the headteacher. At the time of the inspection, there were 12 full-time and two part-time pupils on roll between the ages of three and six years, none of whom have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN) or English as an additional language (EAL). The two children who attend part-time are below statutory school age. Admission is non-selective. The school occupies the top floor of a building which enjoys pleasant views of the surrounding countryside. There is a large field at the side which is used for a wide range of activities. The stated aim of the school is: *'All children need to be given the opportunity to excel in whichever field they are talented, be it academic, sporting, musical or artistic'*.

### **Summary of main findings**

Saddleworth Preparatory School is a very happy school where staff are committed to the care of the pupils. The small numbers of pupils in each class ensures all are valued as individuals. The quality of teaching is outstanding, and this inspires pupils to achieve very well. The curriculum is broad and exciting so that pupils enjoy learning. Pupils are very well behaved. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. A number of policies need to be checked to ensure that they comply fully with Department for Education and Science (DfES) guidance. Parents are not fully informed in the prospectus about the range of policies that they may request to see. The school is successful in meeting its aims.

### **What the school does well:**

- it provides outstanding teaching;
- its pupils achieve very well and lessons challenge their thinking skills effectively;
- it ensures that the excellent relationships between staff and pupils promote exemplary behaviour and a good ethos for learning;
- its provision for pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is very good and the school encourages pupils to grow into thoughtful young people;
- its strong partnership with parents makes a significant contribution to the quality of pupils' learning.

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

- ensure the policies detailed in section 3 of the report have regard to current DfES guidance;
- maintain an admission register and an attendance register in accordance with the regulations;
- ensure that prior to the confirmation of their appointment all staff at the school have been subject to a check with the Criminal Records Bureau to confirm their suitability to work with children;
- ensure that parents are informed as detailed in section 6 of this report; and
- ensure that the complaints procedure is available on request to parents of pupils and prospective pupils.

**What the school must do to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002**

In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA, the school should:

- devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.

# **COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION**

## **1. The quality of education provided by the school**

### **The quality of the curriculum**

Saddleworth Preparatory school provides a good curriculum. It is well planned and offers a broad range of subjects with a good balance of time given to each.

The school takes account of the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage curriculum to plan an interesting and imaginative programme of activities appropriate for the age and stage of development of the pupils. The activities encourage pupils to investigate, be creative and have fun. All the six areas of learning are taught. Personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy and mathematical development are planned effectively to form the core of the curriculum. Planning for knowledge and understanding of the world and creative and physical development are thoughtfully woven into daily activities so that pupils actively involved in their learning in a stimulating environment. The vast majority of pupils exceed the early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1.

In Key Stage 1, all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are taught. There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' skills in speaking and listening in all subjects. A high proportion of time is devoted to phonics, reading, handwriting and mathematics, resulting in pupils making very good progress. Science, history and geography are taught through integrated topics.

In the reception class and in Key Stage 1 the curriculum is enhanced by the introduction from visiting specialist teachers of French, music, and elocution. Pupils have been successful in examinations in elocution which has improved their confidence and self-esteem helping to prepare them well for the outside world.

The school's programmes for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship clearly reflect its aims and ethos. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy diet as demonstrated by the contents of their lunch boxes. They are developing a good understanding of how to keep themselves fit and safe and are keen to take responsibility for their actions. The school is helping them to be confident learners, able to make sense of their ever-widening world. Topics such as 'People who help us' provide suitable opportunities to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of citizenship. The school's charity work highlights the role the pupils can play in the local and wider community.

While the school lacks a hall for children to take part in physical exercise when the weather is inclement, it benefits from a large outdoor playing field where they can run freely and develop their physical skills confidently.

There are occasional educational visits that complement the subject matter being studied. For example, a visit to a local nature reserve gave pupils an understanding of habitats. Regular homework consolidates and extends the pupils' learning in class.

The school's policy for SEN has regard to the national Code of Practice. There is an effective system for identifying and assessing the needs of all pupils. There are currently no pupils at the school who have SEN or who have EAL.

### **The quality of teaching and assessment**

The quality of teaching is outstanding. There is a real sense of teamwork whereby teachers and classroom assistants work together very effectively. Staff provide very good role models for pupils and relationships between pupils and adults are excellent. All parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that their children benefited from a very high standard of teaching. The school works very closely with parents who are highly involved in their children's education.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and their work; pupils rise well to this challenge. They behave sensibly and staff deal with any minor misdemeanours firmly and fairly.

There is a high ratio of adults to children which enables them to interact so that they grow in confidence and self-esteem. Teachers have a clear understanding of how young children learn which ensures that all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and those who are gifted and talented achieve very well. They have appropriate subject knowledge and know how to teach lessons which capture pupils' imagination and fire their enthusiasm for learning. This ensures that the pupils are actively involved at every stage and there is an air of excitement in their learning. Teaching approaches encourage pupils to engage in dialogue and ask questions.

Lessons are planned thoroughly and often begin with an investigation so that children are inspired, develop enquiring minds and learn to think for themselves. Language is promoted thoroughly through discussion and carefully chosen resources. Children enjoy searching through books to find information. Teachers use displays effectively to celebrate pupils' work. Parents and visitors enjoy these. Children are encouraged to use new vocabulary at every opportunity. For example, they are confident to talk about the 'cocoon' when discussing the life cycle of a butterfly.

Teachers' assessment of pupils' learning is systematic and detailed. This helps staff plan the next stages so that pupils are provided with challenging work. Marking celebrates the good work pupils do and also shows them how they could improve their work. Pupils are well prepared for their next schools and last year they all succeeded in gaining a place at the school of their choice.

### ***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

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

The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. The school's Christian ethos is evident in all that it does. Parents say that their children really enjoy coming to school and the children agree.

The attention given to pupils' spiritual development is a strong influence on their acquisition of a set of values and beliefs. All pupils are provided with regular opportunities to develop their self-knowledge and respect for others. They develop a sense of awe and wonder for the natural world as, for example, they observe the life cycle of a butterfly and grow flowers and vegetables in the school grounds.

The school promotes a very good understanding of moral principles that allows pupils to tell right from wrong. Good work, good behaviour and helpfulness are rewarded. Staff choose stories carefully to illustrate particular moral issues. This helps pupils to develop a clear awareness of the effect their actions have on themselves and others.

Pupils' social development is very good. Teachers provide regular opportunities for them to co-operate and they are very willing to take on class responsibilities, performing their duties diligently. The emphasis placed on speaking and listening helps pupils develop good communication skills and prepares them well for the next stage of their education. Regular use of the large field gives pupils good opportunities to play team games harmoniously.

Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. They participate in the richness of world cultures through geography, French and assemblies. Music lessons make a good contribution to their development and in art, pupils gain an understanding of a variety of techniques and styles from other artists.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

### **3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils**

The school makes sound provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety. All the required policies are in place but some have not been checked against national recommendations. The school has not experienced any serious misdemeanours by pupils in recent years, but would keep records if such incidents occur. The school's effective behaviour policy and reward system promotes the pupils' exceptionally good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. Pupils enjoy their tasks and are highly motivated.

There is a strong emphasis on healthy eating through encouraging pupils to eat fruit at break times, while related topics extend their understanding. Fitness is promoted through regular opportunities to work and play in the open air.

Fire safety is good, with fire drills taking place at least four times a year. The time taken to evacuate the building is logged together with relevant comments. Appropriate fire risk assessments have been completed. Evacuation procedures are evident throughout the school and are fully understood by staff and pupils. Staff are deployed appropriately throughout the day and pupils are supervised carefully, especially at break times, when at least two members of staff are on duty. Two

adults hold current First Aid qualifications. The school has an appropriate written First Aid policy and suitable equipment.

There are some alterations in the attendance registers and a few entries in the admission register have been obscured with correction fluid. The school has not produced a statement with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

***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:*

- *prepare and implement a written policy to prevent bullying which has regard to the DfES guidance: "Bullying: don't suffer in silence" (paragraph 3(2)(a));*
- *prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with DfES guidance 0027/2004 "Safeguarding Children in Education." (paragraph 3(2)(b));*
- *prepare and implement a written policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school which has regard to DfES guidance: "Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits" (paragraph 3(2)(c)); and*
- *maintain an admission register and an attendance register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 (paragraph 3(9)).*

***What does the school need to do to comply with the DDA?***

*In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA the school should:*

- *devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.*

#### **4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff**

The procedures to verify the experience and qualifications of new teachers and support staff are comprehensive. Appropriate checks are made prior to appointments. However, not all staff have been checked by the Criminal Records Bureau.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

*The school complies with all but one of the requirements.*

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

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

- *ensure that prior to their appointment, all staff have been subject to a check with the Criminal Records Bureau to confirm their suitability to work with children (paragraph 4(b)).*

## **5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation**

The school's premises and accommodation are suitable for purpose. It is housed in a Victorian building. A nursery which is not connected to the school uses the ground floor accommodation and the school uses the first floor. The pupils enter the school by two staircases, which also provide suitable arrangements for emergency evacuation. Class areas are semi-open plan and good use is made of the available space. There are an appropriate number of classrooms for the current numbers on roll. There is a room that is used solely by the 'before and after-school' club. The accommodation does not include a hall. This results in pupils having physical education in a classroom or out-of-doors.

The school has been refurbished recently and provides a colourful and attractive learning environment. New carpeting and windows have enhanced the provision for both staff and pupils. The freshly decorated rooms provide a good backdrop for the stimulating displays of pupils' work which enhance the accommodation. The school is well maintained, clean and tidy. There are sufficient toilets and hand-washing facilities. It is undesirable for the pupils use cloth hand towels due to the possibility of cross contamination. It is admirable that pupils are encouraged to clean their teeth, but beakers should be provided to keep each pupil's toothbrush and paste apart from others.

Outdoor play provision is very good. There is a spacious grassed field for play and sports and a small garden in which pupils grow vegetables and fruit such as strawberries. The school has recently acquired a hard-surfaced area close to the school building which enables pupils to play outside if the grass is wet.

### ***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

## **6. The quality of information for parents and other partners**

The quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory. Although the prospectus provides some useful information, it is not as comprehensive as it should be. At present, parents are not informed that they may request to see a range of the school's policies. They are not given details of the school's provision for pupils with SEN or for those pupils for with EAL.

Two consultation evenings for parents are held each academic year. The school also provides parents with two very informative written reports on their children's progress. Pupils are given useful targets to improve their knowledge and understanding.

Regular newsletters keep parents informed of the life of the school and of interesting activities that take place in each year group. Recently, the newsletter has been published by a parent. It is eye-catching and produced to a high quality.

Returns to the parents' questionnaire indicate that the large majority of parents feel well informed about their children's progress in school.

***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 particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for admissions, discipline and exclusion (paragraph 6(2)(e));*
- provide particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements and for pupils with EAL (paragraph 6(2)(f));*
- make clear to parents that they may request to see policies relating to bullying, child protection, behaviour, and sanctions adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving (paragraph 6(2)(h));*
- inform parents that they may request details of the complaints procedure adopted by the school, together with details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding year (paragraph 6(2)(j); and*
- inform parents that they may request to see a list of staff and a summary of their qualification (paragraph 6(2)(k)).*

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

The school has a written complaints procedure. It meets the requirements in that it sets out clear time scales and procedures the school will follow in the management of a complaint. The school has received no complaints requiring a panel meeting to date. The current complaints procedure is not yet available on request to parents.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

*The school meets all but one of the regulations.*

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

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

- *ensure that the complaints procedure is available on request to parents of pupils and prospective pupils (paragraph 7(b)).*

## SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Saddleworth Preparatory School
DfES Number:	353/6015
Type of school:	Preparatory
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	3 – 8 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 6    Girls: 6    Total: 12
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys: 1    Girls: 1    Total: 2
Annual fees (day pupils):	£3,700
Address of school:	1195 Huddersfield Road Scouthead Oldham OL4 4AG
Telephone number:	01457 87 7442
Email address:	<a href="mailto:lucillehirst@tiscali.co.uk">lucillehirst@tiscali.co.uk</a>
Headteacher:	Mrs Lucille Hirst
Proprietor:	Mrs Lucille Hirst
Reporting Inspector:	Mrs Kathleen Yates
Date of inspection:	19 - 21 June 2006

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