

The Pointer School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	2036065
Unique Reference Number	100198
URN for registered childcare	EY240578
Inspection number	329557
Inspection dates	14 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Stephen Dennett

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).

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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

The Pointer School is an independent evangelical Christian primary school located in a residential area next to Blackheath Common. It provides education for boys and girls aged 3 to 11. The school was first opened in 1950. There are 195 full-time pupils and 34 part-time children in the nursery. Pupils transfer to a number of state and independent secondary schools at the age of eleven. The school was last inspected by Ofsted in November 2004. The nursery provision was inspected by the Early Years Inspectorate in June 2008.

Evaluation of the school

The quality of education provided by the Pointer School is outstanding. The curriculum and variety of learning experiences offered are exceptional. The quality of teaching is outstanding overall and never less than good. The headteacher and the staff have been very successful in creating a caring, yet challenging, learning environment. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school has made good progress in addressing the issues raised by its last inspection and now fully meets all regulations. There are very significant strengths in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision which is outstanding. The EYFS department is very well led and managed and has continued to improve, building on the strengths identified in its last Early Years inspection. It provides a very good start for the children and they make outstanding progress.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum offered to pupils is outstanding. The activities provided are directly related to pupils' needs and enable them to make exceptionally good progress in their basic skills by the end of Year 6. Schemes of work are thorough and largely based on the National Curriculum programmes of study. The level of challenge is appropriate to the needs of pupils and provides challenge for the most able and particularly good support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The range of extra-curricular activities and clubs is exceptional. Pupils clearly enjoy these immensely and say so in pupil questionnaires and conversations with inspectors. Pupils also greatly enjoy the annual school journey to the Isle of

Wight. They say that the adventurous activities provided on this trip greatly increased their personal confidence. The curriculum is enabling pupils to become responsible citizens and well-rounded individuals. The head boy and head girl were particularly impressive as ambassadors for the school. They are knowledgeable about a wide range of issues. In the EYFS department, the outstanding curriculum meets the needs of the children effectively and allows them to achieve well and enjoy their learning. They benefit from enrichment activities such as French, Spanish dancing and gymnastics.

The quality of teaching is outstanding overall; it is at least good in Key Stage 1 and outstanding in Key Stage 2. In the EYFS department, the quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers plan a range of interesting activities which challenge the children and make learning fun. They use observation and assessment very effectively to ensure that children make exceptional progress towards and beyond the Early Learning Goals. Pupils of all ages are really enthusiastic about learning and clearly have very good relationships with teachers. Teachers are enthusiastic about teaching, which in turn engages pupils in learning. In nearly all lessons, good use is made of a wide range of teaching methods to engage pupils, including effective use of interactive whiteboards. Very occasionally, however, the pace of lessons in Key Stage 1 is not as brisk as it should be and the level of challenge is not as high as it is elsewhere in the school. Throughout the school, there are good opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills and they work well on their own, in pairs and small groups. Planning is very effective and clearly identifies what pupils will learn and how their learning will be assessed. Work is well matched to pupils' needs and excellently so for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Effective use is made of teaching assistants to support learning, particularly for pupils with additional needs. Teachers evaluate their planning weekly to ensure that subsequent lessons build on prior learning. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and very effective use is made of questioning to extend pupils' learning. In Year 6, pupils are very well prepared for entrance examinations by being given homework and extra tuition as necessary. They say they feel well prepared for exams.

Assessment systems are well focused and provide teachers with good information to ensure that pupils are working at a level suitable to their needs and abilities. Marking is effective and provides pupils with clear targets for improvement as well as encouraging comments and praise where warranted. The school has a very good target-setting system and pupils are well aware of their targets in English and mathematics. This enables them to take responsibility for their own learning and progress at the best possible rate.

Overall, pupils make outstanding progress during their time in the school. The majority of pupils are making exceptional progress in Key Stage 2 in relation to their prior attainment and underlying abilities. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1, although progress in writing in Key Stage 1 is only satisfactory. Children in the EYFS department make outstanding progress in both the Nursery and Reception classes. This applies across the curriculum but particularly in their personal development and in the key areas of reading, writing and understanding of number. Progress in Key Stage 2 in mathematics is outstanding and pupils achieve very high standards by the

end of Year 6. Pupils make very good progress in their key skills in Key Stage 2 and achieve very high standards in information and communication technology and reading. Progress in writing is also at least good and standards are well above expectations. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making outstanding progress in relation to their prior attainment and underlying abilities. They are very well supported and their individual education plans have clear targets for improvement.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. When children enter the Nursery there is a strong focus on getting them to work together and by the Reception year they have developed a keen understanding of the need to respect others. Their learning is enhanced by their ability to work productively in groups. Behaviour is outstanding, including in the EYFS department, both in classes and around the school. During a morning break, for example, Reception children cooperated well in a wide range of play activities. Older pupils are mature, well-balanced and friendly. They get on well together and show concern and empathy with those in difficulty. One nine-year-old boy said, 'I really like the way that some pupils help me when I am in problems'. Levels of attendance are good. Older pupils show a great sense of responsibility for younger pupils and look after them with care. The Christian ethos of the school is very evident and pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the main Christian festivals, as well as the main features of other world faiths. Pupils are very well behaved and courteous towards adults and other pupils. The pupils make a good contribution to the life of the school and the wider community. Pupils are given many opportunities to excel, especially in music, drama and dance. Older pupils are confident, willing to show initiative and take responsibility around the school. Pupils have a good understanding of the institutions and services of England through their studies in personal and social education and citizenship. Pupils have very good social skills and are well prepared for their future economic well-being. They show confidence and determination.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Pupils are exceptionally well cared for and pupils say they feel very safe in school; provision for their welfare, health and safety is outstanding. The school has an effective policy for safe recruitment of staff and ensuring pupils are safeguarded. The school promotes pupils' safety and well-being very well. Healthy eating and exercise have high profiles and staff and pupils are well aware of healthy lifestyle matters. The school is 'eco-friendly' and pupils are well informed about environmental issues. All fire risk assessments have been carried out and equipment is checked regularly. There are sufficient, suitably trained first aiders, including paediatric first aiders. The school has a good three-year access plan which meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. The school complies with requirements to provide a safe environment for children in the EYFS. There are rigorous procedures to ensure that children's specific health needs are met.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the EYFS is outstanding. Because of the vibrant and energetic teaching children make rapid progress in all areas of learning. At the end of the Reception year most are working well beyond their Early Learning Goals. Teachers plan stimulating activities and there are very good systems to assess children's progress. Teachers make skilful use of questioning to establish their understanding. The children's behaviour is exemplary and they respond well to the high expectations that adults have of them. They enjoy learning and are always fully engaged in the activities. There are many opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills and they learn to read and spell through rigorous teaching of letters and sounds. Children learn to interact well with each other and the excellent relationships contribute strongly to the enjoyable and purposeful environment. Children make a good start in learning how to stay healthy and safe. The EYFS curriculum is outstanding and provides a good balance between teacher-led activities and opportunities for children to develop their creativity and independence. It is enriched by the addition of French. Children benefit from specialist teaching in French, drama, Spanish dancing, music and gymnastics. There are robust systems in place to ensure that children are able to learn in a safe, healthy and caring setting. Staff are appropriately qualified and the school meets requirements for the number of adults needed. The EYFS has outstanding leadership and management, which is strongly committed to raising achievement. Classroom practice is evaluated to provide consistency and the curriculum is regularly reviewed.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006.

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:

- Improve the quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 so that pupils' progress is as good as it is elsewhere in the school.

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	The Pointer School		
DCSF number	203/6065		
Unique reference number	100198		
EY URN	EY240578		
Type of school	Nursery and Primary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 1950		
Age range of pupils	3-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 104	Girls: 91	Total: 195
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 23	Girls: 11	Total: 34
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 9,054		
Address of school	19 Stratheden Road Blackheath London SE3 7TH		
Telephone number	0208293 1331		
Fax number	0208293 1331		
Email address	secretary@pointers-school.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr R J S Higgins		
Proprietor	Mr R J S Higgins		
Reporting inspector	Stephen Dennett		
Dates of inspection	14 October 2008		