

Talbot House School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	John Seal HMI

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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

Talbot House is an independent preparatory school for girls and boys aged from three to 11 years. The school is part of the Fidelitas group. The premises were previously three privately owned houses. The school is registered for 180 pupils. Currently there are 163 on roll, including 44 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage all of whom are funded under the government's nursery scheme. Fifteen children attend part time. None of the pupils have a statement of special educational needs. There are no children that are looked after. Pupils are predominantly from White British backgrounds. The school states that its aims are:

'... to provide a happy, stimulating school experience, where children learn and achieve in a safe, caring environment. We promote a sense of community, fostered through positive relationships, healthy friendships, mutual respect, good communication and no tolerance for bullying. Children are significant as members of a smaller school where their contribution is valued and they are able to participate fully in the life of the school.'

This is the school's third Ofsted education inspection since it was registered and opened in 1969. The last inspection was in 2008.

Evaluation of the school

Talbot House continues to provide a good quality of education and meets its aims very well. All regulatory requirements are met; an improvement from the previous inspection. The areas suggested for improvement in the previous report have also been addressed successfully. The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Strengths throughout the school include pupils' outstanding behaviour, outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and outstanding promotion of pupils' welfare, health and safety. Pupils make good progress because of the good teaching and assessment supported by a good curriculum.

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. Written policies and schemes of work are broadly based on the National Curriculum for all subjects and are implemented well. As a result, most of the pupils' needs are met very well. The areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage have equally good planning in place. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is provided effectively, most notably in the annual Health Week, an exceptionally comprehensive approach that provides all pupils with experiences covering a wide range of practical activities. These involve the community police officers, 'fit for football', beach safety, life education and 'boxercise'. Effective physical education (PE) is provided for all age groups who visit the local university's sports facilities and take part in a wide range of sporting and physical activities, including tag rugby and athletics. Regular swimming lessons take place at the local municipal pool. Pupils' basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are well developed to a high standard. The school carefully ensures pupils experience all subjects, some of which are taught by specialist teachers, including science, French and music. The curriculum's wide range of enrichment activities are exemplary and have high participation rates. Examples of these activities include tennis, learning to speak Spanish and lessons for a range of musical instruments. The curriculum is enhanced through regular visits to local places of interest. Pupils talked to inspectors excitedly about activities including the science and history residential visits.

Teaching and assessment are good. From the Kindergarten to Year 6, the quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to outstanding, with much that is good. In the best lessons, teachers are confident in their specialist subjects. Their planning matches the different needs and abilities of all the pupils. Activities are practical, investigative and develop pupils' ability to take responsibility for their learning. Teachers provide pupils with informal feedback on how they are progressing throughout the lesson, giving clear information about how to improve and maximising the progress pupils are capable of making; this is an improvement from the last inspection. In the few instances where teaching is less effective, teachers do not take pupils' prior learning or their capability sufficiently into account. Consequently, the more-able pupils are hindered from making as much progress as they are capable of because they are expected to work through easier activities before the work becomes challenging. Equally, those pupils who sometimes require additional support struggle at the start of lessons because they do not receive appropriately structured work. However, teachers ultimately compensate for this appropriately because of the small class sizes.

The school has an effective system for monitoring and assessing pupils' progress. Standardised national tests are used to measure progress over time, in addition to regular testing for spelling and reading. The information is generally used well by most teachers to inform their planning, but not consistently. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is regular and conscientious.

The weaknesses indicated for teaching and assessment, though not undermining the overall good judgement, suggest that the school's approach to monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching in particular is not quite rigorous enough to provide senior leaders and managers with the detailed information required to ensure consistently high overall quality.

Pupils make good progress during their time at the school and as a result, almost all the pupils pass the entrance examinations for the local grammar schools.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding from the youngest children onwards. The school rightly prides itself on the warm, welcoming and friendly atmosphere. Consequently, all pupils are happy and keen to learn and relationships are very positive. The younger children in the Kindergarten have a strong start and as a result are confident learners. This is sustained throughout their time in the school. Pupils' good awareness of different religions and cultures is effectively promoted through a series of well-planned events marking religious festivals throughout the year. These have included Diwali, Eid and the Chinese New Year. In addition to high standards of basic skills, pupils of all ages work well together and are patient, kind and tolerant of each other contributing to their development of skills which will serve them well in their future lives. Pupils take on additional responsibilities with relish, including as head girl and boy and their deputies, monitors and a recycling team. The school council is effectively involved in the development of school life, including the menus for school lunches. This addressed successfully an area for development from the last inspection. Pupils' attendance is high and their behaviour is exemplary. Pupils' understanding of public institutions is fostered well through the meetings with representatives from the police and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. They are encouraged effectively to think about others; as a result, they have raised funds for very many charities. A powerful example of this was a wreath for the Remembrance assembly for which each pupil in the school had made a poppy.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for all the pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. This includes provision in the Kindergarten and Reception. Under the meticulous direction of the headteacher, the school pays particularly close and rigorous attention to ensure that the procedures and policies for safeguarding meet the current government regulations for staff training for child protection. Health and safety procedures and risk assessments are very robust. Pupils' safety is taken very seriously and there are no reported incidents of bullying and no exclusions. A very high proportion of pupils who returned the questionnaires were very positive about all aspects of school life. Those that spoke to inspectors demonstrated a very good awareness of how to live healthy lifestyles and stay safe. The school's three-year access plan meets the regulatory requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

There are thorough procedures for the vetting and appointment of staff and these meet all requirements. The school has a single central register of staff checks, which contains all the required information.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school's accommodation provides sufficient space for the children and pupils to be taught effectively and safely, and meets all the regulations. The school buildings are well decorated and include furniture and fittings which are fit for purpose. Since the previous inspection, the school has added an additional building to provide up-to-date facilities for administration and reception. This has enabled improved rooms to be provided for Year 1 pupils to learn in and a larger area where lunches can be eaten without encroaching on learning spaces. This is an improvement since the last inspection. There is a suitable area for pupils who are ill. Outside there is a good-sized playground with a range of climbing apparatus.

Provision of information

The school provides clear, accurate and up-to-date information for current and prospective parents and carers and to inspectors, Ofsted and the DfE on request, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. There is an informative and helpful prospectus and website. Almost all of the parental questionnaires returned were very positive, indicating that the parents hold the school in high regard.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's complaints procedure meets the requirements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The good provision and leadership and management secure good outcomes for the children. Consequently, after a strong start, children make good progress in their learning and personal development leaving Reception with skills, knowledge and understanding that are above levels expected for their age.

The school provides a warm, welcoming and stimulating environment and has made the most of the space available. Well-qualified adults support children's learning well. Teachers' effective planning enables children to experience all of the areas of learning although opportunities for independent access to outdoor activities are sometimes limited. Long- and medium-term planning includes good provision for children's different needs. Well-managed resources meet the age requirements and are accessible for children.

Children's good personal development means that they are happy, articulate, confident and secure. They learn to keep themselves safe and healthy through activities that include role play and circle time.

The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. The coordinator is very new to her role but with the support of the headteacher and effective teamwork, the kindergarten and reception team have established effective patterns of working and strong relationships with parents and carers.

The school works very well with outside agencies. Policies and procedures are comprehensive. Records are thorough and children's progress is carefully recorded providing helpful information about their progress to parents and carers in children's learning journals.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets all of 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.

- Monitor and evaluate, more effectively, the quality of teaching and assessment to ensure that they consistently match the best in the school.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, develop children's access to the outdoors even further to enable them to have more independence in their learning outdoors.

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	Primary		
Date school opened	1969		
Age range of pupils	3–11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 76	Girls: 72	Total: 148
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 10	Girls: 5	Total: 15
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 3,728–£6,589		
Address of school	8 Firs Glen Road Talbot Park Bournemouth BH2LR		
Telephone number	01202 510348		
Email address	Admin.talbot@ntlworld.com		
Headteacher	Mrs Charlotte Oosthuizen		
Proprietors	Mr Mark Broadway Mrs Joanne Broadway		

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.



11 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Talbot House Preparatory School, Bournemouth, BH9 2LR

Thank you for making us feel welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed observing you at work, talking to you and looking at your work. Very many of you who returned the questionnaires told us you enjoyed your school and that it was good. We agree with you and have judged that the school gives you a good quality of education and some areas are outstanding.

These are the findings from the inspection.

- Your teachers give you interesting lessons most of the time and this helps you learn and make good progress
- You are able to learn different subjects and have lots of interesting and exciting sports activities and educational visits including your sleep over in the Viking Long House.
- Your attendance is good and you work hard in lessons.
- Your behaviour in the school is excellent and you get on well with each other and the staff very well.
- The school cares for you very well indeed and makes sure that you are all very safe.
- The younger children in the Kindergarten have a good start to their school life and make good progress
- Although most of your lessons are good, sometimes teachers give some of you work that is either too easy or too hard. When this happens, it slows down your learning.

We talked with your headteacher and staff about the very few things that need to be improved and they will be working hard to make things even better for you. These include monitoring teaching a little more closely to ensure that it is always good and, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, giving you more opportunities to play outside.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Seal
Her Majesty's Inspector