

The Villa Pre-preparatory School

54 Lyndhurst Grove, London, SE15 5AH

Inspection dates	23–25 April 2013	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- It is led and managed well. The proprietor gives clear direction to staff about the ethos of the school and ensures that a good standard of education and welfare is provided. The headteacher knows precisely what to do to improve the school and raise standards further, particularly in teaching and learning.
- Good teaching and a good curriculum enable pupils to have a well-rounded education and to achieve well over time. Pupils make good progress in relation to their starting points.
- Pupils develop exceptionally high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence and their behaviour is outstanding. They thoroughly enjoy their learning and their attendance is very good.
- There is good provision to ensure that pupils are safeguarded and kept safe at all times.
- Many parents and carers are very positive about most aspects of the school's work. Nearly all would recommend the school to other families.

It is not yet outstanding because

- A small minority of lessons are adequate rather than good or outstanding. Also, the best teaching that exists in the school is not shared to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and enable pupils to make outstanding progress.
- In Key Stage 1, teachers cannot easily use the information from assessments to challenge pupils further because it is not presented in a user-friendly format.
- Some parents and carers feel that the school does not always communicate effectively with them.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed 12 lessons taught by seven different teachers. Meetings were held with the proprietor, senior leaders, teaching staff and pupils. Documentation and policies, particularly relating to safeguarding, and welfare, health and safety, were scrutinised. Curriculum plans, teachers' assessments, pupils' work and examination results were evaluated.
- The inspector also took account of the responses in 13 questionnaires completed by staff and 44 on-line questionnaires (Parent View) completed by parents and carers.

Inspection team

Michèle Messaoudi, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Villa Pre-preparatory School is a non-selective day school registered to provide education for children from the age of four to seven years of age. It opened in 2001 as a result of the expansion of the nursery that opened in 1997; it is owned by the same proprietor and is located in the same premises. The school does not use alternative provision. The Villa occupies a large Victorian house on a residential street in the London Borough of Southwark. The school was last inspected by Ofsted in February 2010.
- There are currently 47 boys and girls on roll aged from four to seven years of age and they all attend full time. Of the 18 children in the Reception class, seven receive nursery education funding. A large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and a minority have diverse cultural backgrounds. There is one pupil with a statement of special educational needs.
- There have been changes in the headship in the last 12 months. The current headteacher is a long-serving teacher who took up her post in January 2013. Following the departure of a headteacher who had served the school for 11 years at the end of the summer term 2012, a new headteacher was appointed, but resigned in December 2012.
- The school aims 'to provide an environment that promotes self-esteem and confidence, giving praise for trying and not just success, while at the same time encouraging each individual's academic potential'.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' work more systematically to address the issues that make a small minority of teaching adequate rather than good or outstanding.
- Share the best teaching that exists in the school to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and enable pupils to make outstanding progress.
- In Key Stage 1, improve assessment systems that track pupils' progress so that teachers can more easily use this information to further challenge pupils.
- Improve communication with parents and carers so that all feel that their concerns are effectively addressed.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Pupils' achievement is good because the pupils are taught well. From Reception to Year 2, pupils have daily exciting opportunities to develop their communication, reading, writing, mathematical and scientific enquiry skills and to acquire a secure understanding of essential concepts upon which they can build future learning. The same system is used throughout the school to teach pupils how to read. From Reception onwards, pupils use their knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) to decode unfamiliar words and they are encouraged to develop a good understanding of a great variety of texts. Pupils are encouraged to develop their writing skills in a broad range of contexts, and in Key Stage 1 they write at length. By the end of Reception, most pupils exceed the expected goals in all areas of learning. By the end of Year 2, the standards achieved compare favourably with national expectations in English and mathematics and most pupils are accomplished readers. Pupils successfully apply their basic skills in other subjects. For example, Reception pupils were observed counting in French and applying principles of symmetry to creative work; when making sculptures, Year 1 pupils applied their knowledge of geometry to their construction and demonstrated that they understood the properties of the materials used. In a science lesson, Year 2 pupils were able to identify patterns so that they could classify animals and plants into sub-categories.

All pupils make good progress in literacy and numeracy over time. Some make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points in one or more subjects. Pupils with special educational needs or mild learning difficulties make at least good progress in developing their basic skills. This is because of the early identification of their needs, close liaison with outside agencies and tailored programmes that help them to overcome any barriers to learning. As a result, they catch up quickly and reach the expected standards or exceed them. Most pupils are successful in gaining a place at a selective junior school of their parents' choice.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Outstanding

Pupils' behaviour and personal development are outstanding. The staff are very successful in creating a warm and nurturing ethos that fosters a 'can do' attitude in all pupils. As a result, pupils display exceptionally high levels of self-esteem, self-confidence and self-respect, and thoroughly enjoy learning. They apply themselves fully to the tasks set and participate actively in lessons, contributing their views readily and taking pride in their work. From the Reception onwards, attendance and punctuality are very good. Pupils are very clear about the very high expectations of behaviour set by the school and demonstrate high levels of self-control and self-discipline. During the inspection, for example, pupils were heard quietly reminding others of a 'golden rule' they had just infringed, explaining why it was not acceptable, without any prompting from staff. Consequently, lessons proceed without disruption in a climate of mutual respect. Pupils feel free from bullying and harassment and they showed the inspector that they know how to keep safe. Individual pupils who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties have made enormous progress in managing their anxiety and anger since joining the school as a result of the excellent support they receive.

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Personal development is exceptionally promoted through the curriculum, the school's ethos, the teaching and the excellent role models provided by staff. Pupils form extremely positive relationships with others and are welcoming and friendly towards visitors. They enjoy the opportunity to play with pupils of different ages after lunch. They are polite and considerate. They have a very good understanding of diversity and talk about each other's differences in a respectful way. They learn about the diverse religious practices that exist in Britain with a healthy curiosity. Their awareness of public institutions is promoted regularly through the 'people who help us' topic, various subject

areas and educational visits. Pupils have daily opportunities to reflect on moral, social and emotional issues, such as why it is important to be honest and how change affects them. They are proud to shoulder responsibilities as leaders and helpers. They enjoy participating in school productions which raise their self-esteem and self-confidence.

Quality of teaching

Good

The quality of teaching is good and, as a result, pupils make good overall progress in relation to their starting points. The staff are well qualified and experienced and, between them, offer a wide range of skills and talents. Teachers and classroom assistants establish excellent working relationships with pupils and are skilful at engaging them thoroughly in learning. They achieve this by communicating their enthusiasm and asking very probing questions that make pupils think more deeply and so improve their understanding of the topic. Most lessons are characterised by a buzz of excitement and time is used wisely. The vast majority of staff manage pupils' behaviour very effectively without dampening their enthusiasm or allowing pupils to become noisy. The staff listen carefully to pupils' responses and correct misconceptions at once or extend pupils' knowledge and skills by asking further questions. Resources are generally used very effectively to support pupils' learning. However, on occasion, pupils' independence is not sufficiently well promoted. For example, sometimes pupils are not encouraged to use dictionaries or word banks to help with their spelling or vocabulary. On other occasions, visual resources are not used early enough in the lesson to support pupils' understanding, resulting in adequate, rather than good, progress. Classes are small and teachers know their pupils extremely well and so plan tasks that match their varying needs closely. They frequently check on pupils' learning and give useful verbal feedback that helps pupils to improve their work. Where the teaching is outstanding, a high level of challenge is maintained throughout the lesson and pupils make exceptional progress. Pupils' work is marked regularly and written teacher comments sometimes show pupils exactly what to do to improve. The older pupils have learning targets, but these are not always used effectively to raise standards.

In Reception, the staff's continuous assessments of children's learning and development are used very effectively to plan activities that challenge pupils and to track their progress. In Key Stage 1, the school has a suitable assessment framework to assess pupils' learning at different points in the year and systems to track their progress over time. However, these systems do not present the information in a format that teachers can use easily to further challenge pupils. This weakness in assessment systems, and the presence of a very small proportion of adequate teaching, are the main reasons why teaching is not outstanding.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and provides pupils with rich experiences that give them a good all-round education. Personal, social and health education permeates the whole curriculum and makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils' self-esteem, self-confidence, collaborative and leadership skills are promoted extremely well through interactive assemblies, circle times and lessons, and through roles of responsibility, acting and singing in school productions and enrichment activities. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching in physical education, music and French, and from teachers' subject specialism in Key Stage 1. They enjoy learning through practical activities and are supported well by a wide range of indoor and outdoor resources and equipment. The provision for information and communication technology has much improved since the last inspection with the purchase of interactive computer whiteboards which pupils use regularly. Appropriate curriculum plans ensure that pupils make good progress in their knowledge and skills in all subjects, with a strong emphasis on language and communication, numeracy, enquiry, problem solving and creative skills. Pupils with special educational needs or mild learning difficulties are extremely well supported through individual educational plans and effective one-to-one support. In Reception, the curriculum follows a thematic approach that links the various learning areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage and stimulates pupils' interest. For example, when learning about growth, Reception pupils observe the

growth of seeds which they have sown and record their findings in a book which they have made for the purpose. Pupils' learning is enhanced well by educational visits to local shops and public services, farms, museums, theatres, the seaside and France, as well as interaction with a number of visitors. The school is currently seeking to widen the range of after-school clubs and a drumming club and sports clubs have recently been introduced.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Good

The school makes good provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety and meets all the requirements for independent schools, which is an improvement since the last inspection. All Early Years Foundation Stage welfare requirements are met too. The staff supervise pupils closely throughout the day and during off-site visits. The policies and procedures aimed at minimising risks are up to date, implemented consistently and reviewed regularly. Parents, carers and pupils have full confidence in the staff's ability to promote the highest standards of behaviour, combat bullying and keep children safe. The staff adopt a common approach to supporting pupils in developing high levels of self-control and self-discipline. Bullying is very rare and to date there has been no need to apply serious sanctions. Risk assessments of the premises and activities, both on-site and off-site, are meticulously carried out. First aid arrangements are carefully considered and there is a high proportion of staff with first aid training that is appropriate for the age range. On the rare occasions when pupils need to take medication, the required details are recorded in the pupil's diary by a first aider and shared with parents and carers. However, the school does not supplement this procedure with a central record that would make it easier for leaders to check that the correct procedures are implemented. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and meet the current national guidance and all staff receive the appropriate level of training in child protection. All of the required checks are carried out on the proprietor and staff to ascertain their suitability to work with children, and they are properly recorded in a central register.

Pupils feel safe because staff know them as individuals and care for them well. They learn how to keep safe in case of fire, when walking downstairs, playing outdoors, crossing the road, using the local swimming pool, and using computers, scissors and other tools. Pupils enjoy the highly nutritious meals provided by the school and show a strong commitment to healthy eating and drinking. They have daily opportunities to exercise vigorously indoors and outdoors.

Leadership and management

Good

The leadership and management of the school are good. The proprietor, key leaders and staff share the same ambition to secure the best outcomes for each pupil, resulting in pupils' good achievement, good progress in literacy and numeracy, and outstanding behaviour and personal development. The proprietor gives clear direction about the ethos of the school and all staff ensure that great emphasis is placed on pupils' emotional well-being, on releasing pupils' potential without 'hothousing' them, and on preparing them well for their future rather than for just short-term objectives. The proprietor has effective methods to keep well informed about all aspects of the school's work and to ensure that a good standard of education and welfare is maintained. The headteacher took very effective action to ensure that recent changes in the headship did not affect Year 2 pupils' education adversely at a critical time just before taking their entry examinations to selective junior schools. The staff work as an exceptionally cohesive team and, under the leadership of the headteacher, they accurately evaluate the overall performance of the school. The headteacher has an accurate view of what to do to further improve the provision and has the confidence of the staff. However, she has not had sufficient time to implement all the points in her improvement plan and to carry out systematic observations of lessons and pupils' work. Consequently, issues that result in a minority of adequate lessons have not been addressed and the best practice that exists in the school is not sufficiently shared to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching. Also, plans to improve assessment systems so that teachers can more easily use the information from assessments to further challenge pupils are still at an early stage.

The school establishes strong partnerships with parents and outside agencies for the benefit of all pupils. Many parents and carers are very positive about most aspects of the school's work and nearly all say that they would recommend the school to other families. However, a significant minority feels that the school has not communicated effectively with them through the period of change, which the school recognises. The premises provide very pleasant teaching accommodation that ensures safe and effective learning. All of the regulatory failings reported in the last inspection have been addressed effectively. Parents and carers have full access to the required range of information. Clear complaints procedures are implemented to resolve complaints fairly and promptly. The proprietor has ensured the school now meets all of the independent school standards.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	134142
Inspection number	420194
DfE registration number	210/6393

This inspection was carried out 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.

Type of school	Day pre-preparatory school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	47
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Ivan Stoyanov
Headteacher	Suzy Prebble
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2010
Annual fees (day pupils)	£8,820
Telephone number	020 7703 6216
Email address	enquiries@thevillaschoolandnursery.com

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