



SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE

INSPECTION REPORT FOR KINGSCOURT SCHOOL DfE No: 850/6034

The key inspection judgements for this school are:

The quality of education		1
Pupils' personal development		1
Safeguarding pupils' welfare health and safety		1
Leadership, management and governance		1
Effectiveness of the Early Years' provision		2

Compliance with the Independent School Standards:

The school meets the regulatory requirements of schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Compliance with the Equality Act 2010:

The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act.

Compliance with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage:

The school meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Date of inspection: 26 – 28 January 2016

SECTION A: SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

Kingscourt School provides an outstanding quality of education. Pupils' academic achievement is outstanding. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make excellent progress and achieve high standards. They do well in entrance examinations and almost all are successful in going on to the secondary schools of their choice. This success is due in large part to the fact that pupils are exceptionally good learners as a result of high quality teaching and a very interesting curriculum. Teachers are deeply committed to the success of their pupils. The curriculum is broad, with lots of different things to learn, while teachers ensure that reading, writing and communication skills, mathematics and science are taught properly and have plenty of curriculum time. A very strong feature of the school is the numerous clubs, trips to interesting places and visitors who come to the school to talk to the pupils.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They develop in self-confidence and become increasingly understanding of themselves and others. They get on well with each other and are polite to adults. Their behaviour and attendance are excellent. They are increasingly aware of concepts such as democracy and the reasons why it is valued and have a strong understanding of different cultures.

The school's procedures and actions to safeguard pupils and minimise risk are outstanding so that pupils feel safe at school. Recruitment procedures are thorough. The school's leadership and management, including the governance arrangements, work very well to ensure that pupils are given a high quality education with lots of rich experiences in a safe environment.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, leaders and managers have high expectations so that children make rapid and consistent progress in a range of skills. Children are well prepared for moving on to Key Stage 1. Staff take great care to ensure that the environment in which the children are working is safe.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Whilst not required by the regulations, the proprietor should:

- continue to develop the use of progress data so as to fully understand how well pupils are doing and how effective the teaching is; and
- address the recommendations made at the end of this report concerning the Early Years Foundation Stage.

SECTION B: INFORMATION

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION

This inspection was carried out by the School Inspection Service (SIS) in accordance with Section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. It follows the inspection framework agreed by SIS and the Department for Education (DfE).

In reaching their judgements, the inspectors observed lessons in different subjects and looked carefully at samples of pupils' written work. They observed pupils playing at break time and had lunch with them in the dining hall. They saw evidence of pupils' involvement in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. They talked with staff, pupils and Cognita's Education Executive about different aspects of the school. They analysed the school's policies and procedures including those designed to safeguard pupils from harm. They analysed the school's data on pupils' attainment and progress. They looked carefully at parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire. The inspectors were:

Reporting Inspector:	Mr Paul Armitage
Team inspectors:	Mrs Anne McConway Mr Paul Metcalfe

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Kingscourt School opened in 1995. It is housed in a Georgian manor in 20 acres of grounds in Catherington on the outskirts of Horndean in Hampshire. It is a non-selective, co-educational independent day school registered for pupils aged between two and eleven years of age. There are 153 pupils on roll of which 23, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, attend part time. There are 40 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. None of them is below the age of three. All the children receive nursery funding.

One pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school has identified 21 others who have learning needs of different kinds. About half of these have individual education plans provided by the school while the remainder is given focused support by class teachers. Two pupils have English as a second language but they are competent at English.

Kingscourt School is part of the Cognita Schools Group. The school was last inspected in 2012 by Ofsted. The school describes itself as "a place for adventures, hard work, vivid memories and friends for life".

SECTION C: THE INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

1. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is outstanding.

Pupils' learning and achievement

Overall, pupils' achievement is exceptionally high. Taking into account their different starting points, they make outstanding progress as they move through the school. Progress is strong in English, mathematics and science and is especially so in English. Pupils also make equally strong progress in other subjects such as the humanities, modern foreign languages and art. For example, the high quality is evident not only in pupils' artistic skills but also the challenging subject matter in their drawings and paintings.

Overall attainment is also high. Most pupils are performing well above expectations for their age. A review of other evidence including the analysis of exercise books and discussions with pupils confirms the statistical evidence. This also confirmed that the achievement of boys and girls is broadly similar. As a result of this high achievement, pupils do well in entrance examinations and move on to high performing secondary schools of their choice. A good number of scholarships are awarded to Kingscourt's pupils.

Support for pupils with special educational needs or disabilities is highly effective in ensuring the vast majority of these pupils make good or better progress. Pupils respond very well to the well-targeted support provided by teachers and teaching assistants.

Pupils are exceptionally good learners; they are eager to explore, ask questions and write and talk about what they are learning. The vast majority of pupils are always keen to do better. During the inspection, younger ones were eager to show the work they had just completed. The quality of written work in the sample seen by inspectors was high. This included the ability of pupils to present their work well. Teachers quite rightly refer to exercise books as "busy working documents". Pupils are also very good at speaking in class and assemblies and at the drama rehearsals in the school hall.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching is consistently high. This is the result of teachers' strong commitment to pupils' education. Teachers are confident in their subjects and keen to share their interest with their pupils. They work very hard, preparing their lessons very well, and make very good use of resources to make it easier for pupils to understand. They often provide additional support when pupils do not understand and also give their time freely to run the substantial range of extra-curricular activities. Overall, they provide challenging opportunities to which pupils respond very well.

Of particular importance is the support they give to pupils with different levels of learning need. They successfully provide pupils of varying abilities with different work and focus closely on the targets of those pupils with individual educational plans and statements. Teaching assistants are very well deployed to support

individuals and groups. Both teachers and teaching assistants use questioning very effectively.

Teachers ensure that reading, writing and communication skills are well supported across the school. The very well-considered and effectively implemented 'Calculation Policy' which sets out how mental and written calculations should be pursued across the school contributes vitally to the high standards of numeracy observed.

There is an excellent framework for assessment. The school uses a range of assessments with different age groups, but its prime form of assessment remains the use of National Curriculum levels. Along with other Cognita schools it is exploring alternatives. The school has long collected attainment data which it has used over the years to measure how pupils are doing. It has also recently started using its rich store of data to measure pupils' progress from their starting points. The school is just beginning to realise the usefulness of this data in judging pupils' success and allowing teachers to adjust their teaching to pupils' different rates of progress and needs to continue to develop this further. The syllabuses of the different entrance examinations also provide the school with clear criteria for setting work and judging older pupils' performance. The quality of marking is exceptional and pupils are well able to assess their work and find the levels very useful in this respect.

The quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding. It covers a wide range of subjects and closely follows the requirements of the English National Curriculum. It is rich and interesting and provides pupils with many challenges. It meets the learning needs of pupils exceptionally well and suitably prepares them for their next phase of education. While much of the curriculum remains the same over time, there is also frequent change as teachers take account of pupils' interests and aspirations and also the views of parents. One example is the introduction of French in Year 1 and Spanish in Year 6. Another is the way the new personal, social, health and economics education (PSHEE) course is progressively changed as teachers find out what works well. The curriculum is also carefully adjusted for pupils with special educational needs, taking full account of their often very specific targets.

The curriculum is enriched by a multitude of activities to support what is taught in class. These include visits to the local library and nearby park as well as trips to the National Gallery, British Museum, HMS Victory, the Houses of Parliament, and the Natural History Museum. Work in English is supplemented by theatre trips to see *Matilda* and *War Horse* whilst the science department organises a visit to the Winchester Science Centre. Significant numbers of pupils take part in overseas school trips such as the forthcoming visit to Paris.

School clubs are numerous and well attended including art, cookery, dance, handwriting, gym, judo, mathematics, music and a range of sports including archery, cricket, fencing, football, netball, rugby and tennis. The school is active in a number of external sports competitions. The benefit to pupils is considerable in terms of developing knowledge and understanding of a wide range of issues and events. Sporting activities develop skills as well as confidence.

2. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The quality of pupils' personal development, which includes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils are considerate, polite and well-mannered. As they grow older, they are learning more about themselves and others. Pupils are also developing strong moral values, as was evident in a thoughtful discussion on the actions and motivation of Beowulf. Pupils grow in self-confidence. In part this is due to their feeling happy with their levels of academic achievement but it also stems from the support they give each other and their success in extra-curricular activities such as sport. The work of the School Council is a very good example of the way that pupils take responsibility for identifying and raising issues in the school and develop an understanding for why their suggestions are not always realistic.

Pupils' social development is exceedingly good. They get on very well together and also with adults. Behaviour is generally excellent throughout the school. Attendance and punctuality in lessons are high, reflecting pupils' positive attitudes to learning.

Pupils' cultural development is also outstanding. In addition to subjects of the curriculum such as English, music, art and drama which provide opportunities to study European and other cultures, their programme of visits and support of different world charities provides significant insights into other peoples' worlds. Charities supported include the Cognita-wide Global Fund for Children and there have been recent visits to places of worship of different faiths. There have also been visitors from different cultural groups. The developing PSHEE programme covers a very wide range of topics. A key theme that pupils were covering during the inspection was the meaning of democracy and how it is experienced in the United Kingdom. In assembly, pupils of all ages responded very accurately, in an age-appropriate way to questions on this topic. They also understand that there are two sides to an argument. This represents a very good beginning to understanding British values.

The school's pastoral system is strong. The support the pupils receive at transition periods between key stages and also between schools enables them to maintain their self-confidence and prepares them thoroughly for the next stage of their education. As a result, pupils talk confidently and happily of what the future holds. The process is greatly aided by the school's strong liaison with staff in the secondary schools and excellent communication with parents.

3. SAFEGUARDING PUPILS' WELFARE, HEALTH AND SAFETY

The safeguarding of pupils is outstanding. The school has in place very many measures to ensure as far as possible, the safety of pupils. The culture of vigilance is very strong and pupils' welfare is constantly promoted.

Staff are very well trained in safeguarding and are well versed in what to do if they discover a safeguarding problem. There has been recent training in female genital mutilation and in the anti-radicalisation programmes - Prevent and Channel. Staff have also been trained in e-safety. The outside teacher who is brought in to teach sex and relationships education makes it clear to pupils what they need to know to stay safe and make sensible decisions. She covers a broad range of issues including aspects of the Equality Act such as sexual orientation. Drugs education is taught successfully as part of science.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead and her deputy have been trained to the appropriate level and are equally knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures. They have strong links with local agencies. The child protection files are in good order. The Designated Safeguarding Lead and the headteacher are very mindful of when to refer issues to the local authority for an opinion. In this they are assisted by clear and useful Cognita guidelines.

The single central register is properly constituted and entries are recorded accurately. The school also has the appropriate evidence from agencies working in the school that all the required checks have been made on their staff. Several staff at the school have been trained in safer recruitment. The school is meticulous in obtaining and checking references to ensure that pupils are protected.

The school's policies to support the welfare of pupils cover all the required areas. There is a clear and helpful child protection policy and other policies including those for bullying, behaviour, first aid, radicalisation, supervision and health and safety. There are also missing child, lock down and intimate care policies. All these policies are applied effectively. Risk assessments are thoroughly undertaken and recorded. This includes risk assessments for off-site visits. The provision for recording an evaluation of visits after they have been made is particularly good. The school's accommodation is in very good condition and is very well maintained.

Pupils in discussions with inspectors showed a very useful understanding of how to stay safe. They were particularly well informed about e-safety with regard to the dangers of seeing something unacceptable or being groomed online but less so on grooming in other situations. They also had an age-appropriate understanding of drugs and issues related to sex and more particularly, relationships. They had a very good understanding of how to keep healthy. The PSHEE course has clearly had a strong impact on their understanding in matters related to safety.

4. LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The quality of the leadership and management is outstanding. The headteacher clearly has a very strong vision about the expected quality and standard of the school's provision for its pupils. She successfully shares this vision with all her staff. Parents, in their questionnaire responses, have clearly recognised this so that comments such as "My child has thoroughly enjoyed and benefited from his years at Kingscourt. The school has given him a wonderful start. Kingscourt achieves the perfect balance of academic rigour, fun, competition, preparation for senior school and confidence" are typical. Of the 163 responses, only a very small handful had anything critical to say. The result of this shared vision is the very high academic performance and excellent personal development of the school's pupils.

The senior management team and those with middle management roles exercise their duties very well. There is also strong, effective cooperation between teachers, which has helped maintain the high quality of both the teaching and the curriculum as a result of shared ideas.

The senior management team understands all aspects of the school very well and their recent focus on monitoring progress in addition to attainment has improved their understanding even further. They are exploring its potential in supporting teaching. The present system for monitoring teaching is effective but is shortly to be supplemented by the introduction of performance related pay. The school development plan is detailed and relevant.

The introduction of the PSHEE programme with its solid and substantial place in the curriculum has begun to have a significant impact on pupils' understanding of a wide range of issues as well as helping them to understand how things are done in Britain. Safeguarding arrangements are excellent.

The school's administration, led by the Bursar, is very effective and has played a significant role in ensuring the school's excellent relations with parents. This ensures that parents receive all the required information. The school's new virtual learning environment (VLE) on the Internet is also beginning to play its part.

Governance

The proprietor is very well aware of its responsibilities and because of its cooperation with the headteacher and other members of the senior management team has ensured that all the independent school standards are met. From the governance minutes, it is clear that the Education Executive, acting as link person, has played a significant role in ensuring good communication between the school and the proprietor and so contributing to high quality. The newly introduced safeguarding committee chaired by an independent person indicates very clearly both the school's and the proprietor's awareness of and commitment to all aspects of safeguarding. Through the committee, they have a means of ensuring that not only matters arising are acknowledged but are acted upon.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS' PROVISION

The overall effectiveness of the EYFS is good with some outstanding features.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management

Leaders and managers have ensured high expectations for consistently good range of skills to ensure that children's progress is rapid. They have created an ethos which ensures that children behave well in child-initiated activities where they show confidence and respect each other. Both the relationships with parents and the provision of information to them are exceptionally good.

Leaders and managers are experienced and effective in providing a challenging environment for staff. Regular self-evaluation includes the views of parents, staff and children to identify areas for improvement.

The curriculum provides a broad range of interesting and challenging experiences that help children to make progress. Children are well prepared for transition to Key Stage One. Children who are identified as having additional needs have a modified curriculum and receive the support they need, including through effective partnerships with external agencies and other providers. Leaders and managers have made effective adjustments to the curriculum to actively promote diversity and British values.

A programme of professional development for staff has been planned to improve their knowledge and practice. An effective performance management system ensures that staff are monitored regularly to improving practice but it does not include peer observations.

Policies and procedures for safeguarding are effective and the statutory welfare requirements are met. Supervision of children is effective though more formal arrangements, recently formulated, have yet to be implemented.

Teaching, learning and assessment

Most of the teaching is consistently good and as a result, children's overall progress is good. Staff have high expectations of all children's achievement based on regular assessment. They plan stimulating learning experiences and suitably challenging activities. Staff carry out regular observations and question skilfully to assess the children's knowledge. They listen carefully to what children say and use their observations to adjust their planning and meet the needs and potential of each child.

Staff teach about the world, technology, exploring, using media, people and communities exceptionally well providing a wide range of opportunities for children to learn about those beyond their immediate experience. The youngest children are learning about the planets and their distance from the earth as well as listening to music associated with them involving identifying the sounds of musical instruments. Children are exceptionally well supported to learn communication and language skills as well as phonics and early reading skills.

Staff support all children to develop the physical, personal, social and emotional skills they need for the next steps in their learning. Mathematical development is promoted effectively from an early age with children associating quantities with numerals to ensure that they are ready for school.

Occasionally, teachers rush towards the answers too quickly without providing explanations that improve the children's learning. There are also a few occasions when children are not encouraged to become independent for example by being required to put on their own coats before going out to play. There are also some inconsistencies between staff with regard to staff voice levels.

The 'key person' system works effectively to engage parents in contributing to initial assessments of children's starting points on entry. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress. Parents may view their children's learning daily online through virtual learning. They are also encouraged to support and share information about the children's learning and development at home. Excellent resources and activities reflect and value the diversity of children's backgrounds and experiences, though none of them are accessible to Reception children at break time outdoors.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Staff provide a stimulating, welcoming environment that motivates children and interests them in wide ranging activities. Children regularly display characteristics of developing self-confidence in adult-led and child-initiated activities. The 'key person' system helps children to form secure attachments, and this promotes their health and well-being and independence.

Children feel safe and secure and are developing an understanding of risk through activities that encourage them to explore their environment. A healthy diet is encouraged through nutritious snacks and lunches. Physical exercise takes place on a weekly basis and through spontaneous outdoor activities. Children respect and celebrate each other's differences through planned cultural activities such as Chinese New Year. They are happy, behave well and enjoy their learning. Attendance is good.

Outcomes for children

The outcomes for children are good. Most children are working comfortably within the range of development typical for their age. Where children's starting points are below those of other children of their age, assessment shows they are improving well over a sustained period and the gap between them and other children is closing. Children are developing the key skills needed for the next steps in their learning and for starting school.

Recommendations:

- Implement the planned programme of professional development for staff to include formal peer observations;
- Ensure a consistent approach to developing children's independence and staff voice levels; and

- Provide reception children with access to resources outdoors at break times.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Kingscourt School			
Address of school:	182 Five Heads Road Catherington Waterlooville Hants PO8 9NJ			
Telephone number:	02392593251			
Email address:	office@kingscourt.org.uk			
Web address	www.kingscourt.org.uk			
Proprietor:	Cognita Schools			
Head Teacher:	Jacky Easton			
Early Years Manager	Amanda Bembridge			
DfE Number	850/6034			
Type of school	Independent school			
Annual fees	£7,875.00			
Age range of pupils	2 – 11 years			
Gender of pupils	Male and female			
Total number on roll	full-time	170	part-time	23
Number of children in registered nursery				26
Number of children under-5	Boys:	15	Girls:	18
Number of compulsory school age pupils	Boys:	93	Girls:	67
Number of post-compulsory pupils	Boys:	0	Girls:	0
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need	Boys:	1	Girls:	0
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	Boys:	0	Girls:	2
Type of inspection	Section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008			

This report has been prepared by the School Inspection Service, which provides independent professional inspection of all schools affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust, and members of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship or Cognita group. The report is available from the School Inspection Service website: www.schoolinspectionsservice.co.uk.